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## Issues of disarmament in British defence and foreign policy 1918-1925.

Silverlock, Gerard Anthony

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**ISSUES OF DISARMAMENT IN BRITISH  
DEFENCE AND FOREIGN POLICY 1918-1925.**

**GERARD ANTHONY SILVERLOCK - KING'S  
COLLEGE LONDON.**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D., August 2000.



## ABSTRACT

This thesis provides, for the first time, a detailed examination of the factors affecting British disarmament policy in the period 1918-25 and the interaction of that policy with negotiations for multi-lateral disarmament at the League of Nations. It considers the issues of the arms traffic, the private manufacture of armaments, chemical warfare, naval disarmament in the period 1918-24, the problems of land and air disarmament, the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Geneva Protocol of 1924-25. Disarmament is defined as the limitation and control of armaments by international agreement. It should be understood in terms of aims and process, not simply in terms of product, of crude figures for the reduction of military, naval and air armaments. The pursuit of disarmament, therefore, would have required British Governments to reveal a commitment to the international control and limitation of armaments as a foreign policy objective. International tensions in the period following the Great War, the French obsession with security and the USA's failure to approve the Versailles Treaty were serious obstacles to disarmament. In this thesis it is argued, however, that few British decision-makers understood the disarmament problem and that there was insufficient commitment to the process of international negotiation through the League. Although there were influential personalities within the British Government who wanted to see a reduction in Britain's expenditure on the Fighting Services, successive Governments failed to integrate the national and international components of the disarmament question. It is also argued that inappropriate decisions by the League itself played a significant part in the failure of initiatives to extend the scope of naval disarmament and to achieve land and air disarmament.

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Gerard Anthony Silverlock.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Historians of British defence and foreign policy between the two world wars have identified several important themes: the relationship between disarmament and security, the differing ambitions of revisionist and non-revisionist States, the tensions between so-called idealist and realist decision-makers, and the influence of public opinion on policy making. These themes are relevant to this study which examines the factors affecting British disarmament policy in the period 1918-25 and the inter-action of that policy with League of Nations' negotiations for multilateral disarmament. Such a study is necessary because there is a wide gap in the literature covering disarmament during these years, except for the Washington Conference of 1921-22. Until now there has been no attempt to provide an integrated study of the arms traffic, the private manufacture of arms, chemical warfare, the attempt to extend the principles of the Washington Conference to non-signatory Powers, and schemes initiated at the League of Nations to achieve land and air disarmament.

The most significant of the older studies of disarmament which deal with this period are those by Chaput, Madariaga and Wheeler-Bennett.<sup>1</sup> Chaput and Wheeler-Bennett both provided useful surveys of the action taken to reduce armaments between 1918 and 1925 but their work was based on the very limited evidence then available and they both eschewed value judgements. These observations also apply to the study of the security problem in the period 1917-

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<sup>1</sup>Chaput, R.A. Disarmament in British Foreign Policy (London: Allen and Unwin, 1935); Madariaga, S. de Disarmament (Washington: Kennikat Press, 1929); Wheeler-Bennett, J.W. Information on the Reduction of Armaments (London: Allen and Unwin, 1925)

1926 which Wheeler-Bennett produced with Langermann.<sup>2</sup> Salvador de Madariaga was Director of the Disarmament Section of the League of Nations Secretariat from 1922 to 1927 and his study was informed by his experience of the efforts made at Geneva to achieve disarmament. It combined analysis of these efforts with a passionate appeal for a re-organization of the world community on the basis of a universal League of Nations. He argued that the principal reason for the slow pace of disarmament was the USA's refusal to join the League. The negative attitude of British Governments to disarmament initiatives at Geneva also merited criticism, however, and he considered that Britain's record there would have been abysmal had it not been for the efforts of Robert Cecil, Lord Privy Seal in Baldwin's short-lived Conservative Administration of 1923.<sup>3</sup>

During the last twenty years there have been three important studies covering British disarmament policy in the 1920s.<sup>4</sup> Shorney's thesis examined the period from 1916 to 1931 and attached considerable importance to the role of public opinion. He argued that the attitudes of the British people in the inter-war years were essentially pacific and that during the period 1919-23, the Treasury successfully exerted pressure in favour of arms reduction, a policy which had 'the wholehearted support of the Press, Parliament and public opinion'.<sup>5</sup> He concluded that in the three years following the end of the Great War of 1914-18,

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<sup>2</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, J.W. and Langermann, F.E. Information on the Problem of Security (1917-1926) (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927)

<sup>3</sup>Madariaga, *op.cit.*, p.304

<sup>4</sup>Shorney, D.J. 'Britain and Disarmament 1916-1931', Durham University, Ph.D., 1980; Richardson, D. The Evolution of British Disarmament Policy in the 1920s (London: Pinter, 1989); Kitching, C.J. Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament 1919-1934 (London: Routledge, 1999)

<sup>5</sup>Shorney, *op.cit.*, p.4

arms limitation was an important objective of British foreign policy but thereafter 'Britain did more to obstruct than promote international disarmament'.<sup>6</sup> This assessment of British disarmament policy in the second half of the 1920s is largely supported by Richardson's highly critical analysis of Baldwin's second Conservative Government:

With the exception of the National government of 1931-5, it is difficult to find a more incompetent handling of disarmament policy by a British government in the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

Kitching's study covered the period from 1919 to 1934 and reached conclusions very similar to those of Richardson, namely, that British Governments generally pursued 'a purely reactive policy, with a considerable element of procrastination thrown in for good measure'.<sup>8</sup> She argued that it might have been possible to achieve international disarmament if Britain had been prepared to provide France with the security guarantee it so desperately wanted.<sup>9</sup>

In recent articles Philip Towle and Zara Steiner have criticized British disarmament policy from a different perspective, arguing that the attempt to achieve international disarmament was doomed to failure from the outset because it was based on assumptions which contradicted the realities of relations between the Powers.<sup>10</sup> Towle believes that it brought into the open differences

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.368

<sup>7</sup>Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.197

<sup>8</sup>Kitching, *op.cit.*, p.174

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.180

<sup>10</sup>Towle, P. 'British Security and Disarmament Policy in Europe in the 1920s' in Ahmann, R., Birke, A.M. and Howard, M. (eds.) *The Quest for Stability*.

between the British and the French which should not have been discussed in open forums. He argued that the result of this public discussion was that British disarmament and security policy led in the opposite direction from that desired: it produced insecurity and pressure for rearmament.

Before examining these issues it is essential to have a clear definition of disarmament. Shorney defined disarmament as 'the general limitation and reduction of national armaments by voluntary international agreement'.<sup>11</sup> This definition has several important implications. First, it suggests that limitation and reduction of national armaments are policies moving in the same direction whereas it is possible both to limit and increase national armaments. Second, it precludes either arms limitation or arms reduction resulting from agreements between a limited number of Powers, such as the Washington Naval Treaty. Third, it precludes unilateral decisions to reduce or limit armaments such as those which British Government Ministers claimed they had made in the years immediately following the conclusion of the Great War. These last two points are of considerable importance because, while British Government Ministers publicly stated their support for the League, at no time in the period under consideration were decisions taken either to limit or reduce armaments through international agreement under the auspices of the League. These points do not of themselves invalidate Shorney's definition but he tended to confuse the issue by identifying different types of disarmament, none of which accord with his own definition: the disarmament imposed on Germany in 1919, unilateral

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Problems of West European Security 1918-1957 (London, the German Historical Institute: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.127-153; Steiner, Z. 'The League of Nations and the Quest for Security' in ibid., pp.35-70

<sup>11</sup>Shorney, *op.cit.*, p.2

disarmament and disarmament resulting from agreements between a limited number of Powers.

To provide an adequate definition of disarmament in the period under examination is no easy matter for the term was used by decision-makers in a variety of different ways. The Report of Committee No. 6 (Armaments) to the First League Assembly in 1920 saw disarmament as the final stage of a three part process. First, there should be agreement by members of the League 'not to exceed their present scale of armaments save at the request of the League or in circumstances recognised as exceptional'. This the Committee defined as limitation of armaments. Second, there should be general agreement 'for a proportionate and simultaneous reduction either in the scale of armaments or in the existing military budgets of the Members of the League'. This the Committee regarded as reduction of armaments. The final stage, which the Committee quite explicitly defined as disarmament, would see 'a scientific and comprehensive reduction of armaments under the supervision of the League to the lowest figure compatible with national security'.<sup>12</sup> The Committee's three part definition, admirably clear though it is, would appear not to have been noticed by Britain's leading decision-makers. On 29 June 1923 the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) considered the question of the reduction of armaments and treaties of mutual guarantee. Before it was a memorandum by its Secretary, Maurice Hankey, who was also the Cabinet Secretary. Lord George Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was unhappy that Hankey had stated that Britain was in favour of 'general disarmament...It appeared perfectly obvious to him that the

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<sup>12</sup>FO371/5843: League of Nations - Report of Sub-Committee A of Committee No.6 (Armaments), 14 December 1920

country was not in a position to cut down its armaments further than had been done already'.<sup>13</sup> If this claim by Curzon could be proved correct, it would mean that Britain had unilaterally carried through reduction of armaments to a level defined by the League in 1920 as 'disarmament'. Lord Salisbury, the Lord President of the Council, chaired this CID meeting and he suggested that, as Hankey's statement of the aims of the British Government went too far, 'it might be possible to amend the wording of the resolution to a question of "reduction of armaments" instead of "general disarmament" '.<sup>14</sup> This distinction might have been of psychological value in easing the susceptibilities of those who feared that Britain's Armed Forces were inadequate, but it does not aid intellectual clarity. At this same CID meeting Robert Cecil, who was the principal advocate of League action to bring about reduction of armaments, held 'that it would only be possible to guarantee peace by ultimate disarmament. In using the term "disarmament" he intended in reality to imply a limitation and reduction of armaments'.<sup>15</sup> Cecil was prepared, therefore, to link limitation and reduction of armaments in the same way that Shorney has done. Salisbury, however, pulled them a little further apart by referring to 'reduction *or* limitation of armaments'.<sup>16</sup> Thus it is clear that the decision-makers were themselves prone to use the terms disarmament, reduction of armaments and limitation of armaments in a confused and sometimes confusing way. This, though, does not exonerate the historian from the need for clarity.

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<sup>13</sup>Cab2/3: CID minutes, 29 June 1923

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. Author's italics

Richardson, unlike Shorney, was admirably clear about the meaning of disarmament: it is 'the limitation and control of armaments by international agreement'.<sup>17</sup> In explaining this definition he also made a most important distinction between 'the disarmament problem in external policy and the armaments question in internal policy'.<sup>18</sup> Richardson was here concerned to point out that the Conservative Government of 1924-29 pursued an armaments policy which was based on 'the concept of minimum perceived requirements' but motivated by a thoroughly pragmatic analysis of national and imperial requirements.<sup>19</sup> This should not be mistaken for a disarmament policy, as such a policy would have required the Government to reveal a commitment to the international control and limitation of armaments as a foreign policy objective. Richardson, therefore, was defining disarmament in terms of aims and process, not simply in terms of product, of crude figures for military, naval and air armaments. This sophisticated definition has a much wider application than the period 1924-29 and casts light on the realist-idealist dichotomy so frequently referred to by historians of British defence and foreign policy after the 1919 Peace Settlement.<sup>20</sup> It can too easily be assumed that there was a chasm separating the idealists from the realists and that this was evident in the practical policies which they pursued. As a result, the important differences regarding process can be missed. A brief examination of correspondence in August-

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<sup>17</sup>Richardson, op.cit., p.iv

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.198

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.198

<sup>20</sup>Carr, E.H. The Twenty Years Crisis (London, Macmillan, 1981), passim; Kennedy, P. The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), pp.240-42



September 1925 between Maurice Hankey, an arch-realist, and Cecil, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from 1924-27, reveals this point.

On 6 August 1925, Hankey wrote to Cecil asking him to comment on a paper which he had written concerning disarmament.<sup>21</sup> This paper, headed 'An Introduction to the Study of Disarmament', was not an official paper. Rather, it was intended only to assist Hankey in the development of his thoughts on the issue. The objective was to question what Hankey regarded as a widespread feeling, namely, that disarmament was generally beneficial. Here Hankey was using the term disarmament in the limited sense, to describe arms reduction. He argued that the collapse of the Roman Empire and its defeat by barbarian tribes were closely linked with disarmament and the inter-related decline in military spirit. He clearly feared that the British Empire was in danger of following a similar path and experiencing a similar fate. Hankey nevertheless considered, however, that British arms reduction since the end of the Great War had brought 'benefits in the improvement in our credit and reduction in taxation...advantages not lightly to be set aside'.<sup>22</sup> Yet, despite these benefits, Hankey was worried that zeal for disarmament - in the sense of arms reductions - would undermine the enthusiasm of young men for military careers. He suggested, therefore, that it would be wise to move slowly on disarmament and he ended the paper with an Italian proverb:

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<sup>21</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51088, Hankey to Cecil, 6 August 1925

<sup>22</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51088, paper by Hankey, 'An Introduction to the Study of Disarmament', 4 August 1925

"Chi va sano, va piano ; chi va piano va lontano." (He who goes wisely goes slow; he who goes slow goes far.)<sup>23</sup>

Cecil's reply is not available but Hankey wrote to him on 18 August thanking him for his thoughts. It is clear from this letter that Cecil had expressed strong disagreement with Hankey's philosophy, so strong that Hankey set out to explain that there was some misunderstanding:

But my paper was not written as an opposition to peace, as you suggest. I tried to show rather that, whatever you do, war will come sooner or later, and, if you carry disarmament too far and crush the military spirit, your civilisation will go under.<sup>24</sup>

At this point it is possible to view the correspondence as revealing very clearly the widely differing perspectives of realist and idealist decision-makers. It is interesting, however, that when Cecil replied on 24 August he felt able to write that he was 'glad to find we are not so far apart as I feared'.<sup>25</sup> His agreement with Hankey on the need for caution suggests that this was more than conventional courtesy:

The danger does not seem that we shall disarm too quickly at any rate under any general scheme. There is a danger that the West Europeans who are the most peaceful and civilised states shall be

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51088, Hankey to Cecil, 18 August 1925

<sup>25</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51088, Cecil to Hankey, 24 August 1925

hurried by their own public opinion into reckless reduction of armaments leaving the world at the mercy of central and East Europe which would be a black result. That is one of the reasons why I have always been anxious for a general scheme [of disarmament]...<sup>26</sup>

The striking feature of this passage is the importance which Cecil attached to 'a general scheme', to international action and, therefore, to the process of disarmament. Arms reduction alone did not constitute progress and might even harm the cause of peace: progress would only be achieved if there was general agreement between Powers on the pace and scale of the reduction. In this sense Cecil was prepared to see truth in the Italian proverb which Hankey quoted. This is arguably of greater importance as far as practical politics in the post-war years were concerned than the more obvious differences in philosophy between the realists and the idealists. It is for this reason that throughout this thesis the term disarmament will be used, following Richardson, to describe policies, advanced through the League or through other forms of international agreement, which were intended to limit and control armaments generally.

On the conflict between idealists and realists, both Steiner and Towle made a number of important observations. Towle argued that the principal division within British policy was not between pro-Europeans and imperialists but 'between those who hoped to solve international problems by general disarmament measures negotiated through the newly established League of Nations and those who wanted to improve Franco-German relations by regional

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

agreements and by political concessions'.<sup>27</sup> Cecil, Philip Noel-Baker, a member of the League Secretariat from 1919-22 and subsequently a Cabinet Minister in the 1946-51 Labour Government, and their colleagues in the League of Nations Union were the most important representatives of the first group and must be identified as idealists. Ranged against these idealists were most of the officials in the Foreign Office and the Service Ministries. Steiner put forward a realist view about the essential nature of the League arguing that it was 'based on unrealizable assumptions about the behaviour of states and people; the League ultimately "failed for the deeper reason that its basic conception is impracticable at any time" '.<sup>28</sup> She argued that the idea of collective security was a myth and that the myth was part of the reality. In an important and perceptive piece of analysis she observed that the statesmen of the inter-war period attempted to use the League system and did not exclude it from their calculations. This was because there was a general recognition, even among experienced diplomats, that the pre-1914 system had failed and that, in the League, 'a new instrument had been fashioned which could be used for the reconciliation of opposing interests'.<sup>29</sup> It is an indication of the seriousness with which the League was taken that most European Foreign Ministries set up League of Nations Departments. It is this analysis which justifies Steiner's view that, 'If there was a "myth" of collective security, the statesmen not only encouraged its spread but were among its victims'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Towle, *op.cit.*, p.127

<sup>28</sup>Steiner, *op.cit.*, p.56

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p.56

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p.56

While Towle did not refer explicitly to the idea of a myth, he clearly shared Steiner's view that some influential politicians were entrapped by the League and by the idea of disarmament through international negotiation. He wrote that 'there were many like Austen Chamberlain who erroneously thought that negotiations might help to heal Europe's wounds and that, since the League was committed to disarmament, Britain should do what she could to improve the prospects for such measures'.<sup>31</sup> As Richardson pointed out, however, Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary from 1924 to 1929, never believed that general disarmament through the League was realistic but he went on with the negotiations because the decision to do so had already been taken.<sup>32</sup> There were also, of course, those who saw disarmament as the best way to avoid a return to the trenches of the Great War - the 'Never again' men. Cecil, for example, held that there was a causal link between armaments and war:

...saying that armaments do not lead to war...is very much like saying that alcohol does not lead to drunkenness...without alcohol there would be no drunkenness and without armaments there would be no war.<sup>33</sup>

Towle did not think much of this as a metaphor for encouraging faith in disarmament as it was written shortly after the failure of the prohibition of alcohol in the USA. Towle appears, however, to have missed the important point that Cecil was trying to create a different caste of mind which would

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<sup>31</sup>Towle, op.cit., p.150

<sup>32</sup>Richardson, op.cit., p.99

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Towle, op.cit., p.150

release people from arms-dependence. As Towle himself recognized, the very fact that Cecil played such an important governmental role in League affairs was because successive Prime Ministers forced him upon reluctant Foreign Secretaries. In so doing, these Prime Ministers were 'responding to public opinion and their own ill-thought-out feeling that they should support the League and disarmament'.<sup>34</sup> Such a view indicates that Steiner was right to identify the myth of collective security as a part of the reality for it suggests that the idealists had gone some not inconsiderable way towards undermining confidence in the pre-1914 diplomatic structure. Their problem was that some of those most strongly committed to security through armaments and the old diplomacy - men such as Hankey and Eyre Crowe, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office - occupied stronger positions in the decision-making system.

The distinction between idealists, or liberals, and realists has some validity but there is a danger of distorting the truth if too much emphasis is placed on the differences between pro-Europeans and imperialists and between internationalists and regionalists. As Ferris has argued, this structure is not adequate to deal with the views of the principal decision-makers in the early 1920s: in both theory and practice the situation was more fluid than some analysts have suggested.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Leopold Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty from 1922 to 1923 and then Colonial Secretary from 1924 to 1929, was an imperialist for whom regional treaties were as dangerous as general treaties because the inevitable tendency of both was to draw Britain into European

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p.152

<sup>35</sup>Ferris, J.R. The Evolution of British Strategic Policy (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp.43-46

conflicts. Cecil, approaching the issue from an entirely different perspective, was nevertheless prepared to encourage the establishment of regional treaties as long as they were open and registered with the League. Although Cecil's ultimate objective was the limitation and control of armaments by international agreement, this did not prevent him from recognizing that serious conflict was more likely to break out in Europe than in any other continent. It was for this reason that he was prepared to support the conclusion of partial or regional treaties under the League, convinced that they would ease tension in Europe. In this sense he was a realist who recognized that in Europe there were particular problems which required special treatment. It cannot be said, however, that this made Cecil a regionalist or undermined his credentials as a proponent of international disarmament.

If it is unwise to divide the decision-makers into rigid groups, it is also an error to see in the League Covenant an outright rejection of all that had taken place in the century before 1914. While Jaffe has shown that Britain did not take up the issues of German disarmament and general disarmament until late in 1918 and then largely because of public pressure during the 1918 General Election campaign to end conscription, the international context in which the disarmament debate developed emerged from the pre-war diplomatic structure rather than being a rejection of it.<sup>36</sup> Northedge identified important features of the nineteenth century system which provided the basis of the League Covenant. By 1914 the principle of arbitration had developed to the point where there was a conviction that this system should be strengthened by providing for penalties against States refusing either to go to arbitration or to accept an arbitral award.

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<sup>36</sup>Jaffe, L.S. The Decision to Disarm Germany (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981)

In much the same way, it was held that the nineteenth century conference system had to be formalized and given an on-going character. Further, in order to prevent the slide into war which many believed had happened in 1914, arbitration and the conference system had to be employed so as to bring a delay in the development of any dispute.<sup>37</sup>

This analysis draws attention to important continuities in the structure of international relations. The Great War and the 1919 Peace Settlement, however, altered the distribution of power, especially in Europe, and created new tensions between States. Indeed, Towle argued that the revisionist States held the key to international relations in the 1920s. The Settlements achieved at Paris in 1919 and Washington in 1922 both failed because they were unable to deal with the challenge posed by the revisionist States: Germany in Europe and Japan in the Pacific. As regards security:

In fact disarmament and arms limitation treaties self-evidently provide no answers to the problems presented by revisionist states. The *only way* revisionists - for as long as they remain such - can be prevented from overthrowing the status quo is by assembling superior force to dissuade them, as the French knew only too well. A balance of power is a recipe for disaster and self-evidently revisionists will not agree to treaties which enshrine their military inferiority.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Northedge, F.S. The League of Nations - its life and times 1920-46 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), p.25

<sup>38</sup>Towle, op.cit., p.151. Italics original



Towle regarded disarmament negotiations as 'one of the most poisonous of the inheritances left by Wilson to the League...It would have been far better to ignore armaments until political reconciliation had taken place'.<sup>39</sup> His thesis is flawed on two counts. First, it does not take sufficient account of one of the most important schemes which emerged from the League in the early 1920s, the Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TMA). The TMA was first proposed by Cecil in 1922 and aimed to provide security through the creation of an international environment in which any State, revisionist or otherwise, seeking to achieve its objectives by force would be met by the 'superior force' which Towle considered to have been essential. Once such security was provided for vulnerable Powers, it might then be possible to create a diplomatic environment conducive to the peaceful settlement of disputes. Second, it is essential to examine why States were revisionist and to provide some scheme by which their objectives could be reconciled with those of non-revisionist or satiated States. Idealists held that conflicts between revisionist and non-revisionist States were the product of the mistrust and warfare created by the old diplomacy. It is hardly convincing for Towle to assert that what was required was an Anglo-French agreement which would maintain French military superiority and then, from this position of strength, seek to appease Germany in other ways. In place of disarmament negotiations, Towle argued that 'Europe needed a long respite under French military domination whilst German grievances were gradually redressed'.<sup>40</sup> Yet he did not explain how it would be possible for any Power or group of Powers to persuade a militarily superior France to respond sympathetically to German

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p.152

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p.153

grievances. As he pointed out in the same article, any acceptance of the plan put forward in 1922 by Lord Esher, which aimed to limit European land forces according to a pre-determined ratio, could only have been temporary because the Germans could not have been expected indefinitely to accept the proposed Franco-German ratio of 6 to 3.3 armed men in Europe.

In September 1922, Arthur Balfour made the following observation:

The root difficulty of every scheme for linking disarmament with guarantees lies in the fact that, so far as I am able to judge, France will never be contented with anything which the British Empire are prepared to give.<sup>41</sup>

These words focus attention on the connection between security and disarmament. The period following the Great War presented British Governments with both opportunities and difficulties as far as disarmament was concerned. At one level the horrors of the war had demonstrated the need to organize international affairs on a more rational basis. The League of Nations was the outcome of such thinking and its establishment suggested that it might be possible to create a world community based on collective security and disarmament. Yet, at the time the League was formed, 'The psychology of conflict had merged into the mood of victory, and more than a trace of

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<sup>41</sup>Marks, S. 'Ménage à Trois: the Negotiations for an Anglo-French-Belgian Alliance in 1922'; The International History Review, 4, 4, November 1982, p.548

vindictiveness appeared in the proceedings at Paris'.<sup>42</sup> This especially characterized the attitudes of successive French Governments towards Germany in the period from 1918 to 1925 and it presented a serious obstacle to the achievement of disarmament. As Claude pointed out, confidence is essential to the success of collective security:

...collective security cannot work unless the policies of states are inspired by confidence in the system, but it requires an extraordinary act of political faith for states to repose confidence in the system without previous demonstration that security works. The stakes are high in the world of power politics, and states do not lightly undertake experiments in the critical field of national security.<sup>43</sup>

The absence of the USA was, of course, a major blow to the collective security system drawn up by those responsible for the creation of the League. A logical response would have been for States to withdraw from the League but instead 'they shifted to a half-hearted acceptance of the responsibilities and reliance upon the safeguards of collective security, which betrayed an implicit acknowledgement of the fact that the objective conditions of the successful operation of the system had been destroyed'.<sup>44</sup> As will be shown later in this study, the attitudes of British decision-makers to disarmament issues during the

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<sup>42</sup>Claude, I.L. Swords into Plowshares. The Problems and Progress of International Organization (London: London University Press, 1965), p.43

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.234

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p.249

period after the Great War provide considerable evidence to support this analysis.

It must also be recognized that, although a collective security system does not theoretically require disarmament, in practice such disarmament is essential. This is because 'If every state is reduced to military weakness, no aggressor will be strong enough to make a catastrophic war out of an encounter with the community's forces, and no member of the enforcement team will be tempted to feel that its joining up has been a jump from the military frying pan into the military fire'.<sup>45</sup> In the particular circumstances of the period 1918-25, the need for disarmament was also formally stated in the League Covenant.

British defence and foreign policy decision-makers, therefore, had to work within an especially challenging international environment. Britain was a world Power with extensive imperial responsibilities which necessitated the maintenance of significant naval and military forces; it was also an important member of the League with a commitment to achieve disarmament. It was extremely difficult to deal with these interlinked issues of disarmament and security. Although, as Steiner pointed out, 'reduction or limitation of armaments can increase the sense of security among the states and make it easier to mobilize resources for collective action', it can also cause problems: 'for the French disarmament reduced security, and lower force levels can still leave a heavy burden on the suppliers of security'.<sup>46</sup> Britain was one of the principal suppliers of security but its military and naval chiefs argued against both the TMA and its successor, the Geneva Protocol, on the ground that they compelled the country

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p.237

<sup>46</sup>Steiner, *op.cit.*, pp.60-61

to take on unlimited commitments. These commitments, they claimed, could not be met if the British Armed Forces operated from 'lower force levels': a significant rearmament programme was required, they argued, in the event of Britain signing these security agreements.

It is important to consider, therefore, whether all attempts to provide collective security were bound to lead to a situation in which the principal Powers, the suppliers of security, had to increase their armaments in order to fulfil their additional commitments. Were security and disarmament two separate issues or was it possible to link them in such a way as to preserve the integrity of the League ideal? Steiner provided an ambiguous answer concerning the early 1920s, for she wrote that Resolution 14 of the Third League Assembly in 1922 'linked the reduction of armaments with satisfactory guarantees of security and shifted the focus of League attention from disarmament to security'.<sup>47</sup> In so doing Steiner drew too sharp a distinction between disarmament and security and missed the essential feature of the TMA, which developed from Resolution XIV. At its very core was a commitment to disarmament. Signatory Powers were required to reduce their military forces in time of peace to a level laid down by the League Council. Any Power which was the victim of aggression would be guaranteed the assistance of the other signatory Powers only if it complied with this requirement. Given that the commitment would only apply once arms reduction had taken effect, there was justification for Cecil's argument that the chance of aggression would be significantly reduced. It is a mistake, therefore, to assess the TMA in isolation from its twin, a disarmament plan which, in the event, never saw the light of day. Further, as Richardson points out, the TMA

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p.45

had the considerable merit of being acceptable to the French. This was also true of the Geneva Protocol but it was an overly ambitious scheme which, in particular, failed to meet the needs of the European security situation. The TMA, on the other hand, suggested that it was possible for the British Empire to make France an offer with which it would be contented and, in contradiction of Towle, to provide a scheme for disarmament which did not poison international relations. The TMA failed not because of fundamental and self-evident flaws but because the British Government agreed with the views of the Admiralty and the War Office and decided to reject it.

The role of public opinion has been referred to several times and some historians of disarmament have attached considerable importance to its influence. Shorney's thesis included a survey of the attitudes taken by the principal newspapers to the question of disarmament. The purpose of this survey of Press opinion was to show that 'from 1919 to 1931 and well beyond, Britain's Press assumed that there was a national consensus which strongly favoured disarmament'.<sup>48</sup> Of the period 1919-23, he argued that the Treasury successfully exerted pressure in favour of arms reduction, a policy which had 'the wholehearted support of the Press, Parliament and public opinion'.<sup>49</sup> There are a number of serious problems with this argument. First, it reveals a strong tendency to assume that Press opinion and public opinion are one and the same. That newspapers are inextricably linked with public opinion is undeniable but, as the American political scientist, Harwood Childs, observed, 'there is not necessarily a correlation, however, between their opinions and those of the

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<sup>48</sup>Shorney, *op.cit.*, p.44

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p.4

general public'.<sup>50</sup> On this subject Donald Cameron Watt is even more of a minimalist, arguing that the quality Press only represents public opinion in the sense that it makes opinions public by publishing them.<sup>51</sup> Second, Shorney treated public opinion as an unchanging, homogeneous given to which political parties and decision-makers had to respond. In reality the relationship between political and foreign policy making élites, on the one side, and public opinion or opinions, on the other, is a complex one. In his study of British strategic policy in the seven years after the Great War, Ferris argued convincingly that 'the government believed that public opinion simultaneously supported many conflicting things, such as service economies and RAF and naval rearmament. Public opinion did not drive Britain in one direction alone or determine its policies'.<sup>52</sup> Further, the fact that some decision-makers believe public opinion to be of a particular kind does not mean that they are either responsible or responsive to that opinion to any significant extent. Watt pointed out that 'studies of such movements and currents [mass public opinion] do not necessarily have any bearing on the currents and movements of opinion among their ranks [the foreign policy making élite]'.<sup>53</sup> The arguments of Ferris and Watt concerning the role of public opinion are closer to the truth regarding disarmament policy in the six years following the Treaty of Versailles than that advanced by Shorney. Issues of disarmament were rarely considered in Cabinet or CID meetings and there is little evidence in these years that shifts in public

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<sup>50</sup>Childs, H. Public Opinion: nature, formation and role (New York: van Nostrand, 1965), p.67

<sup>51</sup>Watt, D.C. Personalities and Policies. Studies in the formulation of British foreign policy in the twentieth century (London: Longman, 1965), p. 13

<sup>52</sup>Ferris, op.cit., p.44

<sup>53</sup>Watt, op.cit., p.1

opinion were identified or impinged in any consistent way upon the thinking of the principal foreign and defence policy decision-makers.

Within the historical and methodological context which has been outlined, a thematic approach is adopted to the problem of disarmament in British defence and foreign policy during the period 1918-25. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the attempts which were made to achieve international control of the arms trade, focusing on the traffic in arms and the private manufacture of arms respectively. The attitude of successive British Governments to these two elements of the arms trade was markedly different. Britain played a significant and constructive role in the post-war negotiations at Paris which sought to regulate the arms traffic. These negotiations resulted in the Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition, which was signed in St. Germain on 10 September 1919. The Foreign Office expressed strong support for this Convention because it would contribute positively to the security of Britain's imperial possessions by preventing arms falling into the hands of warring tribesmen whose activities would seriously disturb the peace. On this issue, therefore, the British Government demonstrated, in the immediate post-war period, a genuine commitment to disarmament, as defined in this study, even though its principal concern was imperial security. Lloyd George's Administration was not, however, prepared to ratify the Convention unless the USA also ratified it. This was because British ratification, in the absence of US ratification, would result in British arms manufacturers losing trade to American firms. The negative attitude of the US Government was, therefore, a significant blow to Britain's policy of seeking to bring the arms trade under international control and it resulted in the rapid collapse of British support for a



comprehensive settlement of the issue through negotiations at the League. During the following five years British policy on the arms trade was negative and unimaginative. The successful negotiation of a new Arms Traffic Convention in June 1925 was the result of a more co-operative attitude on the part of the US Government and a realistic response by the League's Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments (TMC) rather than a change in British policy.

The private arms industry, which is the subject of chapter 3, was specifically criticized in the League Covenant and some of the most energetic advocates of disarmament, notably Philip Noel-Baker, believed that it was essential for this industry to be brought under control. Following the conclusion of the Paris Peace Settlement, however, it soon became clear that there was considerable international opposition to the abolition of private manufacture and it proved impossible for the League to devise a practical regulatory scheme. At no stage did British decision-makers provide any support for schemes to abolish or regulate the operation of the private arms industry. The Fighting Services, in particular, argued that any such scheme would damage British interests. While there are grounds for criticizing the British Government's approach to the arms traffic question, in this chapter it is argued that its policy regarding the private arms industry was undoubtedly right: all proposals to ameliorate its alleged evils were impractical.

Chapter 4 deals with chemical weapons, one of the most controversial issues to emerge from the Great War. It is argued that chemical warfare functioned as an element both of the disarmament problem in British external policy and the armaments question in internal and imperial policy. As such it

caused serious technical and moral problems which proved impossible to resolve. In dealing with these problems, however, British Governments displayed a persistent and depressing failure of imagination. Although it was widely believed that chemical weapons would ultimately prove to be enormously destructive, at no stage did the leading decision-makers endeavour to initiate a programme of disarmament. Instead, the preferred *modus operandi* of British Ministers was to deplore the existence of chemical weapons while simultaneously declaring that nothing could be done about them. In their handling of the issue successive British Governments displayed incompetence, cynicism and uncertainty.

Following analysis of these issues, chapters 5-7 examine specific attempts to achieve naval, land and air disarmament. Chapters 5 and 6, which deal with naval disarmament in the period 1918-24, revolve around the Washington Conference 1921-22. Between 1918 and 1921, Lloyd George's Government sought to develop a naval policy which would enable it to maintain Britain's naval supremacy in the face of serious competition from the USA and Japan but avoid an expensive naval construction programme at a time of considerable financial difficulty. The Admiralty's Plans Division did put forward proposals to resolve this dilemma by initiating a disarmament process. These proposals did not, however, win support within the higher echelons of the Admiralty and failed, therefore, to progress beyond the Plans Division. Nevertheless, in June 1921 it became clear that the British Government was planning to call a naval Conference in order to achieve a reduction in the naval building programmes of Britain, Japan and the USA. As a result of President Warren Harding's initiative, however, the Conference was summoned by the

USA and took place in Washington rather than London. The initiative remained firmly in the hands of the US Government and the Naval Limitation Treaty which resulted from the Washington Conference was based on the detailed proposals which it had prepared. Although the British Government had wanted such a Conference and contributed significantly to its success by imposing its will on the Admiralty, its preparations for the Washington Conference were inadequate and revealed that it had little confidence in there being a successful outcome.

An interesting and largely unnoticed outcome of the Washington Conference was Captain Segrave's plan to extend the principles of the Naval Limitation Treaty to non-signatory Powers. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the history of this initiative, which is examined in chapter 6, reveals that the Admiralty was prepared to use the League in pursuit of a disarmament agreement which, it believed, could benefit the country's naval interests. Negotiations regarding this proposal exposed the absence of a co-ordinated approach to disarmament within the British Government and, on this issue at least, the excessive ambitions of some advocates of disarmament within the League.

Chapter 7 examines two proposals which emerged from the League in 1922 and were intended to achieve land and air disarmament. The authors of these proposals, Lords Reginald Esher and Robert Cecil, both acted in a private capacity as members of the TMC and had close personal relations with leading British decision-makers. Esher's plan, like Segrave's initiative, drew its inspiration from the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty and, initially, there appeared to be a good chance that the Government would support him.

However, although Lloyd George had over-ruled the Admiralty at Washington, he was not prepared to back Esher's plan against War Office objections. Cecil's scheme aimed to achieve arms limitation through budgetary methods but he, too, faced strong opposition from the War Office. Esher's plan was also subjected to strong criticism by technical experts within the League. This opposition resulted in Esher's resignation from the TMC but Cecil retained his membership even when he joined Baldwin's Administration in May 1923. By this time his proposals for budgetary limitation had been pushed into the background by his proposal that disarmament should be achieved through a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee (TMG). It is argued that the failure of these two schemes was unfortunate because together they might have provided the basis for a successful land and air disarmament process.

Chapters 8 and 9 examine the two proposals which were put forward in the period 1922-25 to secure disarmament through the establishment of a general security guarantee that would create a political climate in which Powers were prepared to reduce their armed forces. It is argued that the first of these, the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TMA), was the more realistic because its operation could have been limited to Europe, where international tension and the danger of land and air rearmament were most severe. Although the TMA received considerable support from within the League, it was strongly opposed by British decision-makers, especially within the Foreign Office and the Fighting Services. Their arguments, although they were often tendentious and revealed little understanding of the draft Treaty, ensured that MacDonald's Labour Government rejected the scheme in July 1924. It was remarkable, therefore, that this same Government played a key role in drawing up the Geneva Protocol at

the Fifth League Assembly in 1924 for this was a more complex version of the TMA and imposed potentially greater constraints upon signatory Powers' freedom of action. The decision of Baldwin's second Administration to reject the Protocol in March 1925 was inevitable in the light of the Conservatives' previous hostility to the TMA.

The collapse of the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1934 marked the end of the attempt to achieve disarmament by general agreement through the League. Richardson described this as 'a turning point in international relations. The post-war world became a pre-war world'.<sup>54</sup> Few would doubt the validity of this judgement but there is also a case for stressing the significance of the Conservative Government's rejection of the Geneva Protocol in March 1925 for this decision was a victory for traditional diplomacy and marked the end of a defined period of negotiations within the 1919-34 era. These negotiations affected the Armed Services and the direction of British defence and foreign policy, the issue of chemical warfare and the future of the armaments industry. They were taken seriously by decision-makers at the time and they merit more attention from historians than they have as yet received: disarmament was a part of the reality of British defence and foreign policy in the period 1918-25.

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<sup>54</sup>Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.211.

## Chapter 2 - The Arms Traffic

Debate concerning the arms industry during the period 1919-25 has received little attention from historians interested in British disarmament policy and the League of Nations. Although it was rarely discussed within the Cabinet and the CID, this omission is surprising because the problem of the arms industry casts further light on the tension between realist and idealist decision-makers and underlines the importance of defining disarmament in terms of both aims and process and not simply in terms of product.

In the years following the Great War there were serious efforts to achieve international control of the arms trade. Those concerned with the issue held that it comprised two separate but closely connected elements, namely, the traffic in arms and their manufacture by private industry. Both of these elements were covered in the League Covenant. Paragraph 5 of Article 8 declared that 'the manufacture by private enterprise of munitions and implements of war is open to grave objections' and instructed the League Council to 'advise how the evil effects attendant upon such manufacture can be prevented, due regard being had to the necessities of those Members of the League which are not able to manufacture the munitions and implements of war necessary for their safety'.<sup>1</sup> Since Article 8 of the Covenant set out the League's commitment to disarmament and members of the League used up a considerable amount of time and energy in an attempt to translate this commitment into real achievement, the inclusion of the private manufacture of arms within Article 8 suggests that the Powers considered it to be an element of considerable significance within the disarmament question as a whole. The traffic in arms also featured in Article 23 under which the members of the League entrusted the new international

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<sup>1</sup>The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, 28 June 1919, Cmd.153 of 1919

organization with a number of tasks, one of which was 'the general supervision of the trade in arms and ammunition with the countries in which the control of this traffic is necessary in the common interest'.<sup>2</sup> There were suggestions that the two elements, the private manufacture of, and the traffic in arms, should be dealt with simultaneously. Despite, however, the greater importance accorded by the Covenant to the problem of the private manufacture of arms, the conviction that the traffic in arms should be dealt with first held sway amongst British decision-makers and within the League for most of the period covered by this thesis. This is largely explained by the fact that there was serious concern within the British Government about the traffic in arms before the Great War ended and there was a determination to address the issue during the peace negotiations at Paris in advance of the establishment of the League. While, however, efforts in this direction met with some success, the progress made represented a poor return on the diplomatic energies invested.

One of the last acts of the Asquith Coalition Government was to establish a CID sub-committee on the arms traffic under the chairmanship of Lord Islington, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the India Office. This sub-committee held five meetings between 8 January and 26 February 1917 and delivered its report on 10 March 1917. The tone and recommendations of Islington's report indicate that the sub-committee sought to make a contribution to disarmament as defined in this thesis, that is, in terms of aims, process and product, while at the same time adhering to a fundamentally realist understanding of international relations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Cab16/44: Report of the CID Sub-Committee on the Arms Traffic, 10 March 1917

Islington assumed that the end of the war would leave the belligerents with substantial stocks of weapons and that it would be very difficult to prevent these weapons falling into undesirable hands. The sub-committee wanted to prevent access to surplus weapons by two broad groups: savage or semi-civilised tribesmen who wanted rifles and ammunition, and anarchists and those referred to as the ' "intellectual" malcontent [sic] of the great cities' who wanted bombs and automatic pistols.<sup>4</sup> It recognized, however, that this would be difficult to achieve because sales of such weapons would provide Governments with an opportunity to acquire funds to offset their heavy war-time expenditure. It was further feared that, if Germany emerged from the war having lost its colonies, it would have no interest in preventing the import of arms into Africa; in fact, through facilitating such trade, Germany might be able to strike at its former enemies. The extent of Britain's Empire in Asia and Africa made it especially vulnerable in this respect. The sub-committee, therefore, urged the British Government to take the initiative in raising the arms traffic question at the post-war Peace Conference 'as a high moral issue of the utmost consequence to civilisation in general'.<sup>5</sup> It asserted that the Peace Conference would offer an opportunity unlikely to occur again of 'securing the adoption of a policy of permanent international co-operation in the matter, which, if faithfully adhered to, should go far towards ensuring the world against future incidents calculated to imperil the general peace'.<sup>6</sup>

In order to achieve genuine progress in this aspect of disarmament, the Islington sub-committee made three important recommendations. First, at the Peace Conference the British Government should secure from the other Powers

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



pledges that they would not dispose of their surplus weapons at the end of the war and that they would prohibit the export of pistols to any destination except under Government licence. Second, a separate agreement with France should be concluded, ideally before the Peace Conference opened, by which France would pledge to co-operate in the implementation of any measures arrived at by international agreement. This was held to be necessary because in the past the French had been happy to allow the arms trade to continue in certain regions under their control. Specifically mentioned was the port of Jibuti in French Somaliland through which arms entered East Africa, a trade encouraged by the local French administration. It was argued that this trade threatened the peace in the adjoining British and Italian territories but did not affect French security because it had no territorial interests in the hinterland. It was believed, however, that the French were concerned about the import of arms into their West African territories and were also likely to be concerned about the arms trade in Asia Minor and Syria, regions which had been allotted to France as spheres of influence after the war. The sub-committee considered that this might provide the basis for a reciprocal Anglo-French agreement on the subject. Such an agreement should provide either for the cession of French Somaliland to Britain or for the strict control, ideally the suppression of the arms traffic at Jibuti.<sup>7</sup> In its observations on the report of the Islington sub-committee, the Indian Government supported the importance given to the arms traffic at Jibuti and went so far as to suggest that a large part of British Somaliland might be ceded to the French so as to provide them with a hinterland which it would be in their interests to secure by controlling the import of arms through that port.<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Reco1/341: Observations of the Indian Government on the Report of the Islington Sub-Committee, 21 December 1917

Islington sub-committee's third principal recommendation was that there should be an international Convention to regulate the arms traffic in what it referred to as the 'danger zone'.<sup>9</sup> Such a zone had been established by the Brussels General Act of 1890 and in 1908 there had been an attempt to enlarge the zone. This, however, had been blocked by French opposition. The sub-committee wanted the international Convention, which it envisaged, to re-activate an amended version of this enlarged danger zone. This would include all of Africa except Algeria, Tunis and the South African Union, the whole of Arabia, excluding Muscat and the Arab littoral of the Persian Gulf, the whole of Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine and all islands adjacent to these regions to a distance of 100 nautical miles from the coast.<sup>10</sup>

There can be no doubt that Islington's sub-committee was committed to addressing the arms traffic problem within the context of internationally agreed arms control and limitation. Moreover, its assessment of the threat which the French and German attitudes might pose to this process revealed that the sub-committee understood very clearly the obstacles to genuine progress on this issue. This combination of idealism and realism is evident in the report's conclusion:

[The sub-committee members were] under no illusions as to the permanent value of any international Convention, however skilfully framed. Examples of the futility of a "scrap of paper", when it conflicts with the determination of an individual State to act as its interests or necessities dictate, are not far to seek. The

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<sup>9</sup>Cab 16/44: Report of the CID Sub-Committee on the Arms Traffic, 10 March 1917

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

most that can be expected of such agreements as we have recommended is that they will prove reasonably effective for a certain number of years after the war, and that the principle of international co-operation, once firmly established, may afford a valuable basis for such further joint action as future developments may render desirable.<sup>11</sup>

This approach to the arms traffic problem is important for it did much to shape British policy on the issue in the immediate post-war period. The hopes of Islington's sub-committee were not, however, to be realized. The withdrawal of the USA from involvement in European affairs caused serious problems and the League was to develop structures and procedures which were considered inappropriate by senior officials within the Foreign Office. An important result of this was that Islington's commitment to viewing the arms traffic problem as an element of external policy was diluted and increasingly it was perceived as an element of British imperial policy. In short, the product came to assume greater importance than the process. These conflicting tendencies can be identified in Islington's report: although he recommended an international Convention, his starting point was the need to prevent arms falling into the hands of native tribesmen who might threaten the security of Britain's imperial possessions. Nevertheless, they were neither immediately perceived nor relevant to the international situation - in 1918-19 British policy adhered closely to the recommendations of the Islington report. As a result, the initial impetus in favour of an international Convention to control the arms traffic came from within the Foreign Office and not from so-called idealistic supporters of the League, whose

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

alleged failures to understand the workings of the real world had to be combatted by the realists in the Foreign Office and their allies elsewhere in the Government.

A little over one month after the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918, Rowland Sperling, Chief Clerk in the American Department, was arguing from within the Foreign Office in favour of Islington's proposal that, before the League of Nations was established, there should be an international agreement to prevent the unloading of surplus arms in regions where trouble had previously occurred or where there was potential for trouble.<sup>12</sup> Sperling advocated this in a memorandum produced just two days before the Foreign Office completed work on its own draft Convention for the Control of the Arms Traffic.<sup>13</sup> This draft Convention embodied the principal recommendations of the Islington report. Surplus stocks of arms and ammunition were not to be exported, arms exports to specified danger zones were in future to be licensed under Government authority, the import of arms and ammunition into the specified danger zones was to be strictly controlled and Powers were to publish an annual return showing the numbers, amount and destination of the arms and ammunition for which export licences had been granted. At this stage the Foreign Office appeared fully to support the process of disarmament, for the draft Convention also envisaged the establishment of a Central Office which would be responsible for the operation of this international agreement. This Central Office - in effect an international organization of verification - was to be under the direct supervision of the League.<sup>14</sup> Following an inter-departmental conference in February 1919, the draft Convention proposed a still closer

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<sup>12</sup>FO371/4356: memorandum by Sperling, 18 December 1918

<sup>13</sup>FO371/4317: Draft Convention for the Control of the Arms Traffic, 20 December 1918

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

control of the arms traffic for it was recommended that a licence should be required for all exports of arms and ammunition, without exception.<sup>15</sup>

This Foreign Office determination to control the arms traffic brought it into conflict with the War Trade Department in the summer of 1919. This was because the War Trade Department had issued an open general licence permitting the export of cartridges and industrial explosives to the greater part of the world, except Central America and Eastern Asia. Curzon, Lord President of the Council and Balfour's deputy as Foreign Secretary, strongly advocated, however, a policy which would be in accordance with the draft Convention for the Control of the Arms Traffic. He wanted the War Trade Department, therefore, to cancel the open general licence and apply a system of special licences to the export of cartridges and explosives to all foreign countries.<sup>16</sup> While the War Trade Department would not act entirely in accordance with Curzon's wishes, it was prepared to delete from its licence any destinations which Curzon considered to be dangerous.<sup>17</sup> Curzon did not achieve a total victory in this inter-departmental battle, but developments at Paris moved rapidly in a direction entirely favourable to his perception of the arms traffic issue.

On 10 September 1919 the Convention for the Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition was signed in Paris. This closely followed Britain's draft Convention and did much to satisfy the concerns about the disposal of surplus arms in Africa and the Middle East. Under this Convention the signatory Powers agreed that they would not allow the export of arms from their territories except with a licence from the Government authorities. Such licences were to indicate the quantities of arms to be exported and their destination. Copies of these

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<sup>15</sup>Cab 29/2 Vol.II: No.108 - Arms Traffic - Report of an Inter-Departmental Conference, held at the India Office, 24 February 1919

<sup>16</sup>FO371/3829: FO letter to the WTD, 23 June 1919

<sup>17</sup>FO371/3830: WTD letter to the FO, 24 June 1919

licences were to be sent to the Central Office, which would be established by the League. Once the Central Office had received these licences, they were to be published. This procedure was established because many 'believed that, by securing in this way the fullest publicity for traffic in arms, something at least would be done to get rid of the evils attendant upon it'.<sup>18</sup> The Convention also defined large parts of Africa and the countries bordering the Red Sea as prohibited zones into which the import of arms should be prevented except under very strict control. Together these two principal elements of the Convention of St. Germain did much to satisfy both the realist and the idealist decision-makers within the British Government. Those whose primary concern was the internal security of Britain's imperial possessions considered that the establishment of so-called 'prohibited zones' would do much to prevent arms falling into the hands of warring tribesmen. The idealists hoped that an internationally approved system of licensing, buttressed by full publicity through the League, would be a major contribution to the disarmament process. At this stage it appeared that the two elements of a genuine disarmament policy, aims and process on the one hand and product on the other, would be integrated successfully.

These hopes would only be realized if the Convention of St. Germain were ratified promptly by the principal arms manufacturing nations, but it soon became clear that the attitude of the USA was likely to deal them a serious blow. In April 1920 the British Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, sent a telegram to the Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland and South Africa explaining that the US Government, pending ratification of the Convention of St. Germain, could not prevent its private arms firms from trading

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<sup>18</sup>FO371/8319: Report of the Third Committee to the Third Assembly of the League of Nations, 22 September 1922

with countries which had not signed the Convention.<sup>19</sup> This development prompted the British Government to propose a significant change to the Convention. It suggested to the French, Italian, Belgian and Japanese Governments that the Convention should apply only to small bore arms and ammunition and to bombs. This had been Britain's original proposal when negotiations for the Convention had begun in 1919 and Milner argued for it once again on two grounds:

Chief obstacles to legitimate trade with civilised countries would be thus removed while most important feature of Convention would be retained namely prohibition of export to prohibited zones of arms etc. likely to be used by turbulent tribes.<sup>20</sup>

The Belgian and Japanese replies to this proposal suggested a different course, that the Convention should be restricted to the prohibited areas.<sup>21</sup> Although the five countries agreed to this modification in August 1920, discussion within the British Government revealed how difficult it was to reconcile realist policies with idealist or liberal means.<sup>22</sup> Lawrence Lockhart, a temporary Clerk in the Foreign Office, wrote that Britain was being compelled 'to choose between an ideal and the commercial interests of this country'.<sup>23</sup> If the existing situation continued, he argued that it was inevitable that British arms manufacturers would lose trade to firms in the USA. The modification proposed by the Belgian

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<sup>19</sup>FO371/4419: telegram from Milner, 9 April 1920

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>FO371/4419: letter from the Belgian Government, 17 April 1920; letter from the Japanese Government, 15 May 1920

<sup>22</sup>FO371/4419: letter from Seymour to other Government Departments, 11 August 1920

<sup>23</sup>FO371/4419: memorandum by Lockhart, 17 May 1920

and Japanese Governments, however, meant that 'one of the principal objects of the Convention, viz., the prevention of the indiscriminate dispersal of war stocks, would be defeated'.<sup>24</sup>

It might be argued that, in giving its support to the decision of August 1920, the British Government was acting cynically in defence of its imperial interests. It is certainly true that Britain had initially argued in favour of a limited Arms Traffic Convention which would prevent the unrestricted import of weapons to those regions which became known as the prohibited areas. There can be little doubt, however, that Britain would have ratified the Convention of St. Germain had the US Government been prepared to do so. Early in 1921 Curzon, now Foreign Secretary, and the Secretary of State for War, Laming Worthington-Evans, expressed support for the Convention provided that the principal Powers, especially the USA, ratified it.<sup>25</sup> Control of the arms traffic, through the Convention, would have contributed to the security of Britain's imperial possessions. This is a clear instance of decision-makers recognizing that idealist or liberal means could be beneficial. The problem was that these liberal means could only operate effectively if the other major Powers also appreciated their value. In the case of the Convention of St. Germain, the failure of the USA to commit itself to international co-operation threatened to deal a major blow to this particular element in the disarmament policy initiated through the League.

The attitude of the US Government rendered futile much of the discussion within the relevant organs of the League. Between 18 November and 16 December 1920 Committee No.6 (Armaments, Mandates and the Economic Weapon) held eight meetings. At its third meeting on 25 November, a sub-

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>FO371/7047: draft FO memorandum, 11 February 1921



committee was appointed to consider a number of issues, one of which was the traffic in arms. Although this sub-committee heard Cecil denounce as 'a very great international scandal' the failure of any Power to ratify the Convention of St. Germain, its final report recognized that Governments could not be expected to do anything else 'when the effect of such action would not terminate the trade in arms, but would merely divert it into other hands', those of the USA.<sup>26</sup> In the face of this difficulty the League Council adopted the proposal put forward by Britain's representative at the League, Arthur Balfour, that a letter be addressed to the signatory Powers asking them to ratify the Convention as soon as possible with the reservation that this ratification would only become effective when all the Powers had done so.<sup>27</sup>

During 1921 and the first half of 1922 very little progress was made on the issue of the Convention of St. Germain. H.A.L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education and a member of the recently established Temporary Mixed Commission (TMC), urged the British Government to use all its influence in favour of the ratification of the Convention. In his opinion this was a treaty 'based upon such clear principles of right reason and humanity' that it could only improve the system of international law.<sup>28</sup> Despite Fisher's memorandum, there was no change in the policy of the British Government but the Cabinet did agree that the question should be raised with the US Government at the forthcoming Washington Conference.<sup>29</sup> In September 1921 the Third Committee of the League also called for the ratification of the Convention and further suggested

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<sup>26</sup>FO371/7048: 4th meeting of Sub-Committee A of Committee No.6 of the First Assembly of the League of Nations, 25 November 1920; Report of Committee No.6 of the First Assembly of the League of Nations, 14 December 1920

<sup>27</sup>FO371/7042: minutes of the Twelfth Session of the Council of the League of Nations, 25 February 1921

<sup>28</sup>Cab24/127: CP3242, 16 August 1921

<sup>29</sup>FO371/5529: extract from Cabinet conclusions, 19 August 1921

that all non-signatory States should be invited to adhere to it.<sup>30</sup> This was wishful thinking. Those seriously committed to the Convention would have been better advised to pursue the approach suggested by Horace Seymour, First Secretary at the Foreign Office.<sup>31</sup> He wanted the references to the League to be removed from the Convention so as to make it more acceptable to the US Government. Four years later this amendment was to play an important part in winning US support for a new Arms Traffic Convention: its adoption in 1921 might have saved a considerable amount of time and effort.

As it was, those who sought disarmament through the League experienced in 1922 the disappointment occasioned by the US Government's final rejection of the Convention of St. Germain. This followed a definite initiative by the British Government to find a way around the USA's objections to the Convention. At the Washington Naval Conference the issue had been discussed privately between Arthur Balfour, the head of the British delegation, and Charles Evans Hughes, the US Secretary of State. Following this, on 4 January 1922, Balfour had sent Hughes a draft resolution prepared by the British Empire delegation which, if it had been adopted, would have involved the Powers represented at the Conference declaring their acceptance of the Convention and their intention to give effect to its provisions as soon as possible. There would have been a reservation to the effect that the USA, not being a member of the League, would reserve its assent to any provisions which required disputed questions to be submitted to the League for its judgement and this reservation would have been accepted by the other Powers.<sup>32</sup> Balfour's

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<sup>30</sup>FO371/7056: Report of the Third Committee of the Second Assembly of the League of Nations, 27 September 1921

<sup>31</sup>FO371/5529: minute by Seymour, 1 June 1921

<sup>32</sup>FO371/7178: Seymour to Tufton, 18 March 1922; FRUS, 1922, vol. I, pp. 545-46

suggestion was not, however, followed up by Hughes and the US Government did not at this stage provide a clear statement of its position on the issue.

Within the Foreign Office there was some disagreement about the appropriate response to the USA. Seymour thought that the Foreign Office should ask the US Government to provide an expression of its opinion as 'It would be useful to get even a definite refusal to ratify'.<sup>33</sup> This opinion was opposed by Sperling who saw no point in extracting from the US Government a refusal to ratify because 'the Convention with its present limited scope is doing the only work we really want it to do & that we had better leave well alone'.<sup>34</sup> In taking this line Sperling was adhering to a limited conception of the Arms Traffic Convention and he received influential support from Sir William Tyrrell, Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office.<sup>35</sup> The US Government's delay in ratifying the Convention had prompted influential decision-makers to emphasise the importance of real, if limited, product over apparently unrealizable process.

The uncertainty about the USA's position was resolved early in August 1922 when Hughes wrote to Chilton, Chargé d'Affaires at the British Embassy in Washington, stating that the US Government could not ratify the Convention of St. Germain. Hughes gave two reasons for this decision. First, it would prevent arms shipments to any Powers which had not signed the Convention and there were a number of Latin American countries which had not signed to which the US Government might consider it appropriate to sell arms. Secondly, the Convention was embedded in the League of Nations of which the USA was not a member.<sup>36</sup> These objections were not surprising but the US Government's

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<sup>33</sup>FO371/7178: minute by Seymour, 27 March 1922

<sup>34</sup>FO371/7178 : minute by Sperling, 28 March 1922

<sup>35</sup>FO371/7178: minute by Tyrrell, 28 March 1922

<sup>36</sup>FO371/7179: Hughes to Chilton, 5 August 1922

rejection of the Convention rendered nugatory three years of hope and effort by those who believed that the control of the international traffic in arms was a vital element in disarmament.

In the period 1919-22 those who supported international action to regulate the operation of the arms trade had been forced to mark time by the dilatory response of the US Government to the question of ratifying the Convention of St. Germain. Within the British Foreign Office there was some satisfaction with this situation because the Convention, as amended by the European Powers in August 1920, had done much to control the import of arms to the prohibited zones. Officials such as Sperling and Tyrrell would clearly have been pleased had this arrangement been indefinitely prolonged. The US Government's decision of August 1922 meant that this was impossible. Further, it stimulated new approaches within the TMC which provoked much criticism from the British Fighting Services and Foreign Office officials. As a result, in 1923 the gap between the idealist and realist approaches to this question became more pronounced. This caused serious conflict between Cecil and the Foreign Office and brought to the surface the opposition of senior officials to the role of the TMC.

In 1922 the Third League Assembly adopted a draft Convention for the control of the private manufacture of arms which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter. This scheme was intended to provide the basis for an international Conference for the purpose of controlling private manufacture. The League Council decided, however, at its January-February 1923 session, that this was not a priority and that it would be a mistake to set in motion the necessary machinery.<sup>37</sup> The TMC took a slightly different view. While it agreed

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<sup>37</sup>FO371/8422: memorandum by Drummond, 21 March 1923

with the Council that it would be inappropriate to call an international Conference, it suggested at its session in February 1923 that preparatory work should be undertaken and that the USA should be invited to make firm proposals as to how they might be prepared to co-operate with other Governments regarding control of the private manufacture of and traffic in arms.<sup>38</sup> This determination on the part of the TMC to keep the issue alive was sufficient to persuade the Council to write such a letter to the US Government on 21 April 1923.<sup>39</sup> This, of course, meant that progress on both aspects of the arms trade within the League of Nations was once again largely dependent upon the policy of the USA. These developments prompted Sperling to minute in obvious exasperation, 'The League is a futile body'.<sup>40</sup>

On 12 September 1923 the US Government responded to the Council's letter of 21 April in such a negative way as to justify Sperling's assessment. It offered neither constructive proposals nor any further explanation of its rejection of the Convention of St. Germain. Instead the reply simply re-stated the reasons given in 1922 for that rejection.<sup>41</sup> Once again the USA appeared to have prevented any prospect of international progress towards control of the arms trade through the League. This, though, did not bring an end to the League's efforts.

The Fourth Assembly in 1923 requested the TMC to produce a draft Convention dealing with both the traffic in and the private manufacture of arms and to invite the US Government to appoint representatives to co-operate with the TMC in this work. Once the Council had received the reports of the TMC, it was to consider summoning an international Conference to draw up appropriate

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>FO371/8422: report by Salandra, 18 September 1923

<sup>40</sup>FO371/8422: minute by Sperling, 6 July 1923

<sup>41</sup>FO371/8422: memorandum by Drummond, 12 September 1923

Conventions.<sup>42</sup> In the light of the USA's continued aloofness towards the League this was a remarkably optimistic approach and it was perceived as such by the Foreign Office. At the end of November 1923, Cecil, now a member of the Government and its official representative at the League, received a Foreign Office memorandum giving him clear instructions to oppose the League resolutions regarding these two matters when they were discussed on the Council.<sup>43</sup> The Foreign Office view was that the attitude of the US Government rendered futile any attempt to negotiate Conventions dealing with either the traffic in or the private manufacture of arms. Any Arms Traffic Convention which reduced the control envisaged by the Convention of St. Germain would be useless. Further, any attempt to draw up a new Convention would tend to focus attention on the limited manner in which the principal European Powers and Japan had interpreted the Convention of Germain since August 1920. The Foreign Office considered that this would be unfortunate because, although that 'convention may not be perfect...it does at least check the supply of arms to turbulent races in Africa and the Middle East, and this was precisely the object which His Majesty's Government had in view when they initiated the negotiations leading up to the convention'.<sup>44</sup> The same memorandum rejected as impractical the TMC's proposals concerning the private manufacture of arms: given that the US Government had not ratified the relatively moderate Convention of St. Germain, it was bound to oppose 'the meddlesome restrictions' envisaged in the scheme adopted by the Third League Assembly in 1922.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>FO371/8422: Report of the Third Committee to the Fourth Assembly of the League of Nations, October 1923

<sup>43</sup>FO371/8422: FO memorandum for Cecil, 30 November 1923

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.



Charles Dodd, a Second Secretary in the Foreign Office, expected that Cecil would follow his instructions and oppose any further efforts to draw up Conventions dealing with the arms trade.<sup>46</sup> Sperling, however, clearly had less confidence in Cecil's willingness to follow instructions for, on 10 December, he minuted, 'I wouldn't be too sure'.<sup>47</sup> On that same day, at a meeting of the League Council, Cecil successfully argued that the TMC should be requested to begin work on drafting two Conventions, one to replace that of St. Germain and one to deal with private manufacture, and to invite the US Government to participate in this process.<sup>48</sup> This clear breach of Foreign Office instructions infuriated Tyrrell, Crowe and Curzon and resulted in the Foreign Secretary sending a letter of protest to Cecil.<sup>49</sup> Curzon wrote this letter as the Conservative Administration prepared to give way to the first Labour Government and the Foreign Secretary therefore recognized that nothing which he wrote on the subject was likely to be of any practical significance. He wanted, nevertheless, to stress his opinion that 'the principle that a Government representative should act in close accord with his Government is a sound one and that the opposite practice can only lead to trouble'.<sup>50</sup>

In January 1924 Curzon was replaced as Foreign Secretary by the new Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The Foreign Office officials no longer had to deal with Cecil as their representative on the Council but their work was still affected by the initiatives of the TMC. Crowe was especially hostile to the TMC on the ground that its members were not representatives of their Governments.

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<sup>46</sup>FO371/8422 : minute by Dodd, 8 December 1923

<sup>47</sup>FO371/8422: minute by Sperling, 10 December 1923

<sup>48</sup>FO371/8423: minutes of the Council of the League of Nations, 10 December 1923

<sup>49</sup>FO371/8423: minutes by Tyrrell, Crowe and Curzon, 18 December 1923; letter from Curzon to Cecil, 26 December 1923

<sup>50</sup>FO371/8423: letter from Curzon to Cecil, 26 December 1923

He considered that to entrust 'the most delicate international questions to an absolutely irresponsible body is bound to do harm'.<sup>51</sup> Crowe wanted the question of the traffic in arms to be taken out of the hands of the TMC and the TMC to be abolished as soon as possible. The Fifth League Assembly in 1924 granted Crowe this particular wish when it decided that the TMC should be replaced by the Co-ordination Commission which was set up primarily to prepare an Arms Reduction Conference in connection with the Geneva Protocol. This Co-ordination Commission was to consist of a ten member Committee of the Council assisted by two representatives each of the Economic, Financial and Transit Committees of the League, six members of the PAC, two members each of the Employers' and Workers' Group of the International Labour Office and, if considered advisable, various experts appointed by the Council. By this stage, however, the situation concerning control of the arms trade had altered significantly.

In February 1924 a new Arms Traffic Convention emerged from the TMC.<sup>52</sup> What was remarkable about this development was that the TMC's meetings had been attended by Joseph Grew, the American Minister at Berne who, in September 1924, was appointed Under-Secretary of State at Washington. Further, the British member of the TMC who was largely responsible for the new Convention, Major John Hills, reported that Grew's attitude suggested that there was a good chance of winning US support for this Convention.<sup>53</sup> In May 1924 the Secretary-General of the League, Sir Eric Drummond, told Parmoor, the Lord President of the Council and Britain's representative on the League Council, that he was confident that the US

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<sup>51</sup>FO371/8423: minute by Crowe, 21 February 1924

<sup>52</sup>FO371/10524: Hills to Parmoor, 15 February 1924

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.



Government was prepared to co-operate with the League in establishing international control of the arms traffic.<sup>54</sup> Drummond's confidence took Foreign Office Counsellor Gerald Villiers by surprise: he did not know why Drummond thought that the US Government would accept the draft Convention nor why it had apparently changed its mind concerning the issue.<sup>55</sup> However, despite Crowe's strictures concerning the 'absolutely irresponsible amateurs' who comprised the TMC, that body had drafted the new Convention so that it took account of the principal US objections to the Convention of St. Germain.<sup>56</sup>

The new Convention differed very little in substance from that of St. Germain but the TMC did identify three clear concerns on the part of the US Government which had to be addressed. First, the 1919 Convention did not permit trade in arms with countries which were not parties to the Convention, a stipulation which would have prevented the USA selling arms to a number of Latin American countries. Second, the US Government was not prepared to subscribe in advance to international obligations which would require national legislation which the Government could not be sure Congress would enact. Third, the Convention was inextricably linked with the League, of which the USA was not a member. The first objection was dealt with by Article 3 of the new Convention which stated that it was permissible to supply arms to any Government recognized as such by the Government of the exporting country. Article 26 overcame the second objection by allowing Governments to adhere to the Convention on a partial or conditional basis provided that the other Powers agreed and this did not impair the effectiveness of the Convention. Finally, it was decided that a Central International Office was to be established by the Council

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<sup>54</sup>FO371/10525: conversation between Drummond and Parmoor, 23 May 1924

<sup>55</sup>FO371/10525: minute by Villiers, 4 June 1924

<sup>56</sup>FO371/10524: minute by Crowe, 1 March 1924

to deal with all the documents and papers relating to the arms trade. The purpose of this article was to leave it to the Council to decide whether or not this Central International Office was to be under the aegis of the League.<sup>57</sup>

In the light of these amendments to the Convention of St. Germain it is not surprising that Drummond should have described the new draft Convention as 'a very conservative document'.<sup>58</sup> However, this conservative document served British interests, as defined by the Foreign Office, particularly well. Although the US Government declined the League Council's invitation to send a representative to the meetings of the Third Committee of the Fifth Assembly in September 1924 which would consider the TMC's draft Convention, Hugh Gibson, who had replaced Grew as American Minister at Berne, declared on 2 September that the US Government would take part in an international Conference dealing with the arms traffic question.<sup>59</sup> It was this decision which paved the way for the Arms Traffic Conference of spring 1925.

This Conference opened at Geneva on 4 May 1925 under the Presidency of Count Henry Carton de Wiart, formerly Prime Minister of Belgium. Forty three nations were represented including four which were not League members: the USA, Germany, Turkey and Egypt.<sup>60</sup> Six weeks of negotiations resulted in the Arms Traffic Convention of 17 June 1925 which, in the short term at least, represented a triumph for those committed to disarmament as defined in this thesis and, at the same time, protected British imperial concerns by preserving the concept of prohibited zones, albeit under the new name of 'special zones'. The progress made regarding control of the arms traffic also had the benefit,

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<sup>57</sup>FO371/10526: Drummond to the FO, 9 October 1924

<sup>58</sup>FO371/10525: Drummond to Parmoor, 23 May 1924

<sup>59</sup>FO371/10525: press release by the US Department of State, 2 September 1924

<sup>60</sup>FO371/11033: the text of Henry Carton de Wiart's speech opening the Arms Traffic Conference, 4 May 1925

from the point of view of the Foreign Office and the Fighting Services, of pushing discussion of control of the private manufacture of arms into the background. The first two meetings of the Co-ordination Committee on 16 and 17 February 1925 decided that discussion of the private manufacture of arms should be adjourned until the question of control of the arms traffic had been dealt with.<sup>61</sup>

Although the Arms Traffic Convention was signed by eighteen Powers on 17 June 1925, ratification by fourteen was required if it were to come into force.<sup>62</sup> While in Geneva towards the end of 1925, Alexander Cadogan, First Secretary at the Foreign Office and Assistant to the British delegate to the League of Nations, received inquiries from the Secretary-General of the League, Eric Drummond, as to when Britain would be prepared to ratify the Convention. Cadogan consulted the Service Departments whose opinion was that it would be unwise to ratify before the other arms producing States did so.<sup>63</sup> In a minute which serves as a fitting epitaph on negotiations for an Arms Traffic Convention, Cadogan wrote:

The Service representatives are undoubtedly right. On the other hand, this will no doubt be the attitude of all the other producing States also, so that ratification of the Arms Traffic Convention will take place on the Greek Kalends. This may be very desirable, and a good choice of date, but if so, it seems rather a pity that we wasted so much time over the negotiation of the convention.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>FO371/11032: McNeill to the FO, 18 February 1925

<sup>62</sup>FO371/11038: message from Onslow, 17 June 1925

<sup>63</sup>FO371/11040: minute by Cadogan, 21 December 1925

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. Underlining original.

It is difficult to find anything positive in the British Government's handling of the arms trade question. The Foreign Office concern with imperial security was entirely understandable: it was orthodox thinking to consider it desirable to prevent arms from falling into the hands of the so-called uncivilized races. Nevertheless, it was short-sighted to believe that the modified operation of the Convention of St. Germain could be maintained for any significant period. It would, therefore, have been more coherent to argue in favour of Seymour's suggestion that the Convention be amended by removing the references to the League to make it more palatable to the US Government. Similarly, senior Foreign Office officials would have had a better chance of influencing discussion at the League in the ways they desired had they been less hostile to the TMC. It is highly ironic that the body which drew so much of Crowe's not inconsiderable ire should have been responsible for drafting an Arms Traffic Convention which brought the US Government back into open co-operation with the League. With rather more imagination this might have been achieved earlier.

### Chapter 3 - The Private Manufacture of Arms

In the previous chapter it was argued that successive British Governments failed to integrate the national and international components of the arms traffic question. Although there were decision-makers who believed that international control of the arms trade would be beneficial, there was insufficient commitment to the process of international negotiation through the League to bring this about. As regards the private manufacture of arms, however, there is little evidence of this dislocation between aims and process in disarmament on the one hand and product on the other. The principal decision-makers were convinced that the control or abolition of private manufacture were unrealistic aims which would bring no benefits to the British Empire and threatened to undermine the effectiveness of its Armed Forces. As a result, there was little official discussion of the problem and there is not much information available in the Government archives, particularly before 1923. Such an attitude was in direct opposition to an influential body of opinion which held that the unrestrained operation of the private arms industry had been a significant cause of the Great War and that its ill effects would have to be removed if disarmament were to be achieved. In 1919 such critics of the private arms industry succeeded in so far as reform of the industry was included in Article 8 of the Covenant which set out the League's commitment to disarmament. Yet, once the question was subjected to detailed consideration within the League, translating this desire for reform into practice proved enormously problematic. Consequently few positive proposals emerged which merited the attention of leading British decision-makers. By 1925 the objective set out in paragraph 5 of Article 8 of the Covenant was no closer to fulfilment than it had been in 1918.

One of the most powerful and determined British opponents of the private arms industry was Philip Noel-Baker whose long career took him from service in the Foreign Office League of Nations Section formed by Cecil in 1919 to positions in Winston Churchill's war-time Coalition and Clement Attlee's post-war Labour Governments. In 1937 he published The Private Manufacture of Armaments, a long and detailed critique of the industry. Noel-Baker's biographer has rightly observed that in this work the case against the private arms industry was built up 'in an unwieldy and repetitive fashion'.<sup>1</sup> It remains, nevertheless, a valuable analysis of what its critics regard as the malign influence of the private arms industry. Noel-Baker provided a very considerable amount of evidence to show the far-reaching political and financial influence of arms manufacturers throughout the world. As an advocate of disarmament, Noel-Baker stressed that the arms manufacturers' concern with profits conflicted with international efforts for peace. In his view it was wholly wrong and indeed paradoxical that men might be required to give their lives in war and tax-payers be required to support huge expenditure on arms while private manufacturers were able to profit by selling their product both to their own Governments and to those of enemy nations. Noel-Baker's thesis was strengthened by his determination to stress the political rather than the exclusively moral aspects of the private arms industry and to reject the view that the private manufacture of arms was the sole cause of war. Although he was convinced that the industry was an obstacle to disarmament, he asserted that the causes of war were far too complex to be explained by the activities of one group of industrialists and their agents. Noel-Baker wanted the arms industry to be nationalized but he stated quite clearly that arms produced in Government arsenals could be just as threatening as those

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<sup>1</sup>Whittaker, D.J. Fighter for Peace - Philip Noel-Baker 1889-1982 (York, Sessions, 1989), p.96

manufactured by private firms. Further, responsibility for the strength of the industry lay firmly with the political decision-makers for it was Governments that ensured that their relationships with private arms companies were closer than those with any other industries. Governments chose to give assistance to arms manufacturers and to support their exporting activities.

In Part II of his book Noel-Baker set out the principal objections to the private manufacture of arms. Throughout the world these firms solicited orders from Governments and used bribery to gain contracts. There was the extensive transfer of retired politicians, civil servants and military officers to influential positions in private arms firms. He argued that the consequences of this practice were the possible loss of efficiency and enterprise in Government arsenals and ordnance factories when such officials left public service before normal retirement age, the lowering of the reputation and morale of Government service and the possible revelation of national secrets to foreign States. This threat to national security was increased by the fact that private arms companies would sell to any Government and this meant that they would sell to States which were potential enemies of their own country. For instance, in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the Austro-Hungarian forces used artillery supplied by Krupps, a Prussian firm. In 1914 Turkey possessed 22 warships built by four countries which were to be its enemies in the Great War - Britain, France, Italy and the USA.<sup>2</sup> It was also argued by Noel-Baker that the existence of private firms made it easier for Governments to evade international treaties for disarmament and against aggression. This was because Governments could deny involvement in breaches of international disarmament agreements if the arms were being supplied to another Power by private companies. Governments would not so

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<sup>2</sup>Noel-Baker, P.J. The Private Manufacture of Armaments vol.I (London: Victor Gollanz, 1937) pp.190-191

easily be able to do this if the arms were being supplied by Government-owned companies. In support of this argument Noel-Baker provided instances of how the activities of private firms such as Krupps and Junkers enabled the German Government to evade the limitations imposed on its armaments by the Treaty of Versailles. He provided further evidence to show that this was also true of the other countries compulsorily disarmed following the Great War.

In support of their activities the private arms companies also sought to influence public opinion through control of the Press. This control might take the form of direct ownership or control of newspapers and journals by arms producers, subsidies to or bribery of such publications or threats to withdraw and promises to increase advertising. The influence of the private arms companies was strengthened still further by their close connection with societies such as the British Navy League and the British Air League. Such societies considered that their country's security would benefit from the possession of powerful armed forces and, therefore, they were inevitably the friends of the private arms manufacturers. The British Navy League, for example, while it was rare amongst this type of organization in not accepting financial contributions from arms companies, had as some of its honorary officers and active members people who, as shareholders and directors, had a direct interest in private arms firms.

Noel-Baker's analysis of the activities of the private arms manufacturers indicated that they were prepared to 'use all means of propaganda which may produce conditions in which their armament orders are likely to increase'.<sup>3</sup> He placed these means in three categories: ' "playing Governments off" one against the other; direct propaganda against Disarmament; the creation of "panics" and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.347



"scares" <sup>4</sup>. By playing Governments off against each other he meant the activities by agents for arms companies in two or more countries which are potential enemies. By telling each country that the other was arming and by secretly providing the arms, these agents contributed significantly to the tension, to the arms race and, of course, to the profits of their company. As regards direct propaganda against disarmament, Noel-Baker provided, as an example, the activities of the Electric Boat Company of the USA which was prepared to allow one of its agents in South America, Commander Luis Aubry, leave of absence so that he could be a member of the Peruvian delegation to the Disarmament Conference scheduled in the Geneva Protocol for June 1925. The Geneva Protocol was never ratified and the planned Disarmament Conference did not take place in June 1925 but Aubry had intended to use his position as a delegate to argue against any limitation on submarine building and for submarines being classified as defensive weapons. <sup>5</sup> It was clearly significant that the Electric Boat Company produced submarines. Noel-Baker attached such importance to the panics and scares initiated by the arms manufacturers that he devoted 61 pages in Part III to an examination of the Mulliner panic of 1909 in Britain. The basis of this panic, according to Noel-Baker, was that H.H. Mulliner, Managing Director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, claimed to have evidence that the Germans were secretly building more Dreadnought battleships than they were then publicly stating. This resulted in the 'We want eight and we won't wait' public agitation of April-July 1909 which demanded that Britain should increase its Dreadnought building programme and the consequent Government decision of 26 July 1909 to lay down four additional Dreadnoughts. Noel-Baker sought to show that Mulliner's claims about the secret German

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p.347

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.355-357

Dreadnoughts were untrue and that he was motivated by a desire to secure orders for his company which had done poorly in the years 1906-9 as a result of the Liberal Government's attempt to reduce expenditure on arms.

The Private Manufacture of Armaments is the work of a man who was totally committed to the cause of disarmament but it cannot easily be dismissed as an example of one-sided and high-minded idealism which had no place in the real world of post-war politics. This is because the essential elements in Noel-Baker's argument had already been articulated by influential voices within the Imperial War Cabinet immediately following the Armistice. In his famous memorandum of December 1918, General Jan Smuts expressed his strong opposition to the private manufacture of arms:

The very success of that sort of business depends on the stimulation of the war atmosphere among the peoples. The Press, influenced by the large profits and advertising enterprise of the armaments firms, whip up public opinion on every imaginable occasion; small foreign incidents are written up and magnified into grave international situations affecting the pacific relations of States, and the war temperature is artificially raised and kept up.<sup>6</sup>

Smuts believed that this problem could only be resolved through State intervention and the establishment of a League of Nations. He wanted the post-war Peace Settlement to include the nationalization of the arms industry and the creation of a system by which the League received a regular supply of information about arms export and imports. Here Smuts was setting out a

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<sup>6</sup>FO 371/4353: memorandum by Smuts, 16 December 1918

radical, idealist case against the private manufacture of arms and arguing that it had to be addressed if progress on disarmament were to be made. A little over a week later this idea that action should be taken against the private arms industry received backing from Sir Robert Borden, Canadian Prime Minister, and Lord Robert Cecil. Although Borden was not convinced that profit-making in arms directly contributed to the outbreak of war, he had no doubt that the public held this view and that 'the Peace Conference would be a sham' if there were no progress towards arms reduction.<sup>7</sup>

Such thinking had important consequences. First, there was the decision to include reform of the private arms industry in Article 8 of the Covenant. This was followed in February 1921 by the League Council authorizing the establishment of the TMC which was required, together with the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions (PAC), to conduct an inquiry into the private arms industry and submit a report to the Council.<sup>8</sup> The first session of the newly created TMC was held in Paris in July 1921 when it appointed a sub-committee to examine both the private manufacture of, and the international trade in, arms. This sub-committee worked with sufficient determination to be able to present a report for the TMC's consideration in September 1921. This report is significant because it both set out very clearly the case against the private manufacture of arms and also began the process of shifting the focus of attention from reform of the private arms industry to control of the international traffic in arms.

Echoing Borden's comments of December 1918, the report points out that, although the Covenant did not identify the grave objections to the private

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<sup>7</sup>Cab23/42: Cabinet conclusions, 24 December 1918

<sup>8</sup>FO 371/7042: minutes of the Council of the League of Nations, 21 February–4 March 1921

manufacture of arms, 'it is a common belief that wars are promoted by the competitive zeal of private armament firms, and would be rendered less frequent were the profit-making impulse brought under control or eliminated altogether'.<sup>9</sup> The sub-committee considered that the objections to the private arms industry could be grouped under six main headings. Four of these objections - that arms firms fomented war scares, bribed Government officials, spread false reports about the military and naval spending of other countries and tried to influence public opinion through control of newspapers - were subjected to detailed examination in The Private Manufacture of Armaments. The report, however, makes two further criticisms of the industry, namely, that firms had organized international arms rings which enabled them to accentuate the arms race by playing one country off against another and that they had established international arms trusts so as to push up the price of arms sold to Governments. Despite being able to identify these objections, the sub-committee was unable either to recommend the abolition of private manufacture or advise upon the means by which it might be brought under control, should it be allowed to continue. Indeed, its analysis of the problems involved in abolishing the private manufacture of arms constituted a powerful case for rejecting this option.

The TMC sub-committee set out a number of closely connected obstacles in the way of abolition of the private arms industry. Of considerable significance was the fear that abolition might, paradoxically, result in a world-wide increase in arms. This possibility was based on two factors. First, under international law the supply of arms by a neutral Government to a belligerent Government constituted a breach of neutrality. This could prompt all Governments to prepare for a possible war by stock-piling weapons and by

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<sup>9</sup>Adm 116/2142: Report of the Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments, 15 September 1921

developing their own capacity to produce arms. Second, non-arms producing States would be under still greater pressure to build their own arms industries as this was the only way that they could be sure of acquiring the weapons they needed. The sub-committee also held that it was necessary to consider the impact of abolition not just on international relations but also on countries' domestic industrial structures. This raised further problems because it was not easy to define war industries and there were very few companies which were involved exclusively in the production of arms. Nationalization of such firms was clearly inappropriate unless it was argued that all industry should be under State control.

These arguments against abolition led the sub-committee to consider the ways in which the private manufacture of arms might be brought under control. Its principal options were based on licensing and publicity. A system which required arms exports to be licensed by the exporting country's Government and imports to be licensed by the importing country's Government would certainly have an impact on the international arms traffic and hence on the private manufacture of arms, especially if it was agreed that such licences had to be registered with and published by the League. This licensing of the arms trade could be reinforced by stipulating that arms could not be manufactured without a Government licence and that, once again, these licences would have to be published by the League. Publicity could also be extended to the accounts and the names of shareholders in arms producing companies. If such information were made public it would also be possible to prevent foreigners from holding shares. Given the opinions expressed by men such as Smuts, it is not surprising that the sub-committee also suggested that people with substantial interests in

arms firms should be prevented from 'owning, controlling, or unduly influencing, the newspaper press'.<sup>10</sup>

In the light of its analysis of the possible ways in which the private manufacture of arms might be brought under control, the sub-committee argued that 'Whatever views be held as to the nature and extent of the evils which, according to Article 8 of the Covenant, result from the unrestricted private manufacture of munitions, it is evident that an essential feature in any scheme which aims at removing or diminishing these evils must be to bring the international arms traffic under control'.<sup>11</sup> Although the purpose of the Convention of St. Germain had been to prevent arms falling into the hands of irresponsible people who might threaten the peace in unstable regions rather than to promote disarmament amongst established States, the sub-committee considered that the machinery of this Convention could provide the basis for the general restriction of the arms trade. In putting forward this proposal the sub-committee appeared to attach greater importance to control of the arms traffic than to international efforts aimed at bringing the private manufacture of arms under control. This move had the support of Captain John Segrave who was Britain's naval representative on the PAC and also served on the TMC. He recognized, however, that implementation of an Arms Traffic Convention would not deal with objections to the arms rings identified by opponents of the private arms industry. Segrave was not convinced that the existence of such rings had been proved but, if it were the case that they exercised such influence, it could only exist 'while governments are quite free in deciding their expenditure on armaments': if arms reduction were achieved 'the question will be automatically solved...[and] there will be no longer any scope for the operations of an

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

"Armaments Ring" '.<sup>12</sup> The problem that Segrave quite explicitly recognized was that arms firms would use their influence to block effective disarmament measures. In his view this meant that 'steps to obviate the evils of private manufacture, if they are to be of any use, must have become effective before the day of reduction of armaments has arrived'.<sup>13</sup> He supported the TMC's judgement that the most practical means of achieving this was through an Arms Traffic Convention.

This change of emphasis as regards the two elements in the arms trade question gradually became more firmly entrenched but in autumn 1921 this was not yet evident. In its report to the Second League Assembly in 1921 the Third Committee recommended action on both private manufacture and the trade in arms. It wanted the Council to summon an international Conference dealing with both issues. All members of the League, together with other interested States which were not League members, should be invited to this Conference which should ideally take place before the Third League Assembly in 1922. The TMC should be given the task of preparing the programme for this Conference and drawing up a draft Convention for its discussion.<sup>14</sup> Although this programme was authorized by the Council on 12 October 1921, the TMC made very slow progress during 1922. A scheme was, however, submitted to the TMC by Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, the British Chairman of the League's Economic Committee, acting on his own initiative. This scheme was adopted by the TMC and then by the Third Assembly as Resolution V.<sup>15</sup> This development, however,

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<sup>12</sup>Adm 116/2142: memorandum by Segrave, 17 October 1921

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>FO 371/7056: Report by the Third Committee of the Second Assembly of the League of Nations 1921, 'Reduction of Armaments', 27 September 1921

<sup>15</sup>FO 371/8319: Report of the Third Committee to the Third Assembly of the League of Nations, 22 September 1922

came far too late in the year for the Council to summon an international Conference.

Nevertheless, the adoption of Llewellyn Smith's draft Convention for the Control of the Private Manufacture of Arms by the Third League Assembly in 1922 brought this element of the arms trade problem once again into greater prominence. Llewellyn Smith's scheme proposed a strict licensing system. Companies would only be able to manufacture and sell arms if they held a licence from their Government and such licences were conditional on companies accepting a number of undertakings. Arms companies would have to keep their Governments informed of any orders which they accepted, they would have to be free of any foreign influence or control and no director or senior manager would be allowed to hold a controlling interest in any newspaper or magazine.<sup>16</sup> These constraints were intended to prevent arms manufacturers from behaving in the manner which had prompted the criticisms advanced by Smuts in December 1918 and by the TMC in 1921.

The British Armed Forces had strong objections to this scheme. The most important was the argument that such a licencing system would discourage companies from producing arms unless this were their principal manufacturing activity. If firms which produced parts of munitions, but whose main business involved manufacturing for civilian work, were not prepared to take on the restrictions involved in the licences proposed by Llewellyn Smith, the effect 'would tend to throw everything into the hands of the great armaments firms and to strengthen their ring, and thus enhance the prices and profits'.<sup>17</sup> If this were correct then it certainly followed that the introduction of a licensing system

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<sup>16</sup>FO 371/8422: FO memorandum, January 1923

<sup>17</sup>FO 371/8422: minutes of informal conference of Fighting Services, 9 January 1923



would restrict the Fighting Services in purchasing the arms that they required. It is also interesting that the use of the term 'armaments ring' appears to be an instance of the Armed Forces giving some credence to the claims of those who were so opposed to the workings of the arms industry. The Fighting Services also argued that the restrictions involved in Llewellyn Smith's scheme might discourage British firms from making arms for foreign Governments. They held that such a development would be prejudicial to British interests on a number of grounds. First, supplying foreign Governments meant that British firms could maintain a larger volume of production which was beneficial to the British Government in time of war and also tended to keep prices down. Second, arms sales to foreign Governments brought money into the country and provided employment. Finally, from the point of view of the League, it was better that countries with no arms producing capacity of their own should buy from foreign firms rather than be driven, by fear that licences might hamper their supply of weapons, to develop their own arms industry.<sup>18</sup>

This analysis of Llewellyn Smith's scheme is clearly highly tendentious but it cannot easily be dismissed for it connects so closely with the arguments set out in the TMC's report of September 1921. In 1923, however, any progress regarding the private manufacture of and trade in arms was dependent on the attitude of the USA. At this stage the USA showed no inclination to co-operate with the League and, as a result, nothing of any substance was achieved in 1923. On 21 April the President of the Council, Antonio Salandra, had written to the US Government inviting it to state in what manner it would be willing to co-operate with other Governments on this subject.<sup>19</sup> The TMC had further suggested, at its June session, that the Council should invite the Governments of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>FO 371/8422: report by Salandra, 18 September 1923

all countries not members of the League to state how far they would be prepared to co-operate in finding a solution to these problems.<sup>20</sup> While the Council approved this TMC recommendation, it decided that no action should be taken until the US Government's reply had been received.<sup>21</sup> The US Government's response of 12 September 1923 was so wholly negative that the Council further postponed action on the TMC's recommendation of the previous June until after the League Assembly had discussed the matter.<sup>22</sup> Despite these setbacks the Fourth League Assembly in 1923 recommended the Council to invite the TMC to submit Llewellyn Smith's scheme regarding the private manufacture of arms to the Economic Committee of the League for its comments and to draw up a draft Convention in co-operation with this Committee. Once this had been done, the Council was then to consider summoning an international Conference with the intention of achieving agreement on such Conventions.<sup>23</sup>

As was shown in the previous chapter, 1924 brought significant progress concerning an Arms Traffic Convention because the US Government adopted a much more positive and constructive approach to initiatives emerging from the League. The private manufacture of arms, however, continued to present serious problems. In part this was because the Canadian member of the TMC, Colonel David Carnegie, complicated matters by submitting a fresh draft Convention in February. Between 26 and 28 April 1924 a sub-committee of the TMC met in Prague to revise this draft Convention. Sir George Clerk, Britain's Ambassador in Prague, reported that Carnegie's scheme, like Llewellyn Smith's, envisaged control being exercised through a licensing system, with the issue of licences

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<sup>20</sup>FO 371/8422: memorandum by Drummond, 25 June 1923

<sup>21</sup>FO 371/8422: report by Salandra, 2 July 1923

<sup>22</sup>FO 371/8422: memorandum by Drummond, 12 September 1923 and report by Salandra, 18 September 1923

<sup>23</sup>FO 371/10526: letter from Avenol to the Chairman of the Economic Committee, 7 August 1924

being determined by a number of considerations 'amongst which prominence is given to the condition that no person who is in a position to influence the policy of a newspaper shall be entitled to receive a licence'.<sup>24</sup> The document approved by the TMC on 9 July in Geneva also proposed that licence holders should be prohibited from carrying on any kind of propaganda relating to the arms for which the licence had been granted. Furthermore, licence holders would have to provide their Governments with information about the directors, managers and higher officials of the company and with the names of the companies producing arms with which they were associated. Finally, arms manufacturers would have to publish an annual report of their companies' operations relating to the production of the material for which the licence had been granted.<sup>25</sup> This scheme, though, gave rise to differences of opinion significant enough for Carnegie himself to give Clerk 'the impression that the Sub-Committee were not unduly sanguine as to the results of their deliberations and that, in their opinion, the best chance of securing the end in view lay in the possible ratification by the United States Government of the St. Germain Arms Traffic Convention of September 1919'.<sup>26</sup> The principal cause of dissension within the TMC was the demand by a minority for the absolute prohibition of the private manufacture of arms. If this were not practical, the minority group urged that the control of the private arms industry should be on an international and not a national basis as proposed by the majority on the TMC.<sup>27</sup>

The Fifth League Assembly in 1924 was dominated by the Geneva Protocol and it was there decided that the TMC should be superseded by the

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<sup>24</sup>FO 371/10525: letter from Clerk to the FO, 1 May 1924

<sup>25</sup>FO 371/10525: TMC document, 'Principles recommended as a basis for an international convention on the national control of the private manufacture of arms munitions and implements of war', 8 July 1924

<sup>26</sup>FO 371/10525: letter from Clerk to the FO, 1 May 1924

<sup>27</sup>FO 371/10526 : TMC, Minority Report, 30 July 1924

Co-ordination Commission which was established primarily to prepare for the Arms Reduction Conference envisaged by the Protocol. This Assembly, however, also requested the Council to reconsider the private manufacture of arms with a view to preparing a Convention which would serve as a basis for the long envisaged international Conference on this subject. At this time the arms trade had not been discussed in Cabinet since the Versailles Treaty and there is no evidence that any of the post-war British Governments had formulated an attitude to the problem. On 15 January 1925, however, despite the differences of opinion within the TMC during the previous summer, the Cabinet believed that this development was important enough to justify establishing an inter-departmental sub-committee of the CID to consider it. At this same meeting the Cabinet appointed Ronald McNeill, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to be Britain's representative on the Co-ordination Commission. Until the Geneva Protocol was ratified the Co-ordination Commission would be unable to begin work in preparation for the Disarmament Conference. In the meantime it was to take over from the TMC responsibility for examining control of the private arms industry. The CID sub-committee, under McNeill's chairmanship, was to draft instructions which he could use when the Co-ordination Commission met on 16 February to deal with the subject.

The CID sub-committee was dominated by the representatives of the Fighting Services and their hostility to control of the private manufacture of arms remained as strong as ever. The sub-committee recognized, however, that there were political as well as defence considerations to be taken into account:

It is realised, however, that in view of the above-mentioned article of the covenant [Article 8] and of the hesitation of His Majesty's Government to accede to the Geneva Protocol, it

would be most impolitic for the British representative to adopt a *non possumus* attitude from the beginning, and to declare that His Majesty's Government could not accept any scheme for the control of the private manufacture of arms.<sup>28</sup>

It was for this reason that it recommended that the Government agree to any system of control which met the following criteria:

- (1.) The similar consent of *all* the principal manufacturing countries, and in particular of the United States of America.
- (2.) The previous conclusion of a satisfactory international convention dealing with the traffic in arms.
- (3.) The scheme must not apply to firms manufacturing solely for their own Government.
- (4.) The scheme must not operate in time of war.
- (5.) Control must be *national*, and not international.<sup>29</sup>

International agreement on a scheme which met these criteria was clearly beyond the realm of practical politics, as the sub-committee doubtless intended. Its concern, however, that the British Government might be criticized for obstructiveness on the issue proved entirely groundless for the first two meetings of the Co-ordination Commission on 16 and 17 February 1925 adjourned

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<sup>28</sup>Cab 4/12: CID memorandum 588-B, 2 February 1925

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. Italics original.

consideration of the subject until the question of control of the arms traffic had been dealt with. In the meantime, a Committee of Enquiry was established and given the innocuous tasks of enquiring of Governments what were their objections to the private manufacture of arms, what measures existed in their countries regarding private manufacture and the extent to which these might obstruct the conclusion of an international agreement on the subject. The Committee was then to prepare a report suggesting the best means of supervising private manufacture. From the point of view of the British Government, the most pleasing feature of these developments was that they were largely the result of proposals by the Brazilian representative and so McNeill had not been placed in a situation where he appeared obstructive.<sup>30</sup>

The repetitive discussion of how best to overcome the perceived problems associated with the private arms industry suggests that, on this matter at least, Richard Sperling was right to describe the League as 'a futile body'.<sup>31</sup> By the end of 1921 it was clear that there was nothing approaching an international consensus in favour of abolition of private manufacture, and the regulatory systems based on Llewellyn Smith's initial scheme were far too complex to be practical. In the previous chapter there was considerable criticism of the way in which the British Government handled the arms trade question. Such criticism would be inappropriate concerning the private arms industry. Within the League there was too strong a tendency to remain shackled by paragraph 5 of Article 8

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<sup>30</sup>FO371/11032: McNeill to the FO, 18 February 1925

<sup>31</sup>FO371/8422: minute by Sperling, 6 July 1923

of the Covenant rather than focusing attention firmly on the more realistic objective of an Arms Traffic Convention. A comment by Alexander Flint, Principal Assistant Secretary at the Admiralty, however, indicates that an achievement - perhaps the only achievement - of the campaign against the private manufacture of arms might have been to influence the British Government's decision to sign the Arms Traffic Convention of 1925. Observing that the aim of that Convention had been to ensure publicity, he wrote:

In this connection it has to be borne in mind that if the extremists do not obtain publicity at least as to the arms exported and the places to which they are consigned, then a strong movement will be initiated, after the Arms Traffic Conference has dispersed, to replace the private manufacture of arms by Government manufacture. It is more important I think [sic] for this country to uphold the private manufacture of arms than to oppose publicity as to its exports, as in the event of war we wish to rely on as many private firms as possible expanding, with the help of their skilled labour, to an enormous extent.<sup>32</sup>

This linkage of the two elements in the arms trade question constitutes an ironic judgement on the efforts of those who between 1918 and 1925 sought to abolish or control the private arms industry.

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<sup>32</sup>Adm1/8693/267: minute by Flint, 14 May 1925

#### Chapter 4 - The Problem of Chemical Warfare

The two previous chapters examined attempts to bring the arms industry under international control. One of the products of that industry, chemical weapons, were used for the first time in the Great War and this development caused considerable controversy. In the period 1918-25 the issue of chemical warfare remained of greater significance than has hitherto been recognized. It is a subject which historians have largely ignored yet it functioned as an element both of the disarmament problem in external policy and the armaments question in internal and imperial policy. The debates within the Government expose some of the decision-makers' perceptions of the nature and importance of public opinion and the differences of analysis which have so often been characterized as the conflict between realists and idealists. What is more striking, however, is the scale of incompetence, cynicism and uncertainty displayed by successive British Governments in their handling of the issue of chemical warfare.

It is an historical common-place to state that war accelerates change but this was certainly true of the impact of the Great War on chemical warfare. Prior to the Great War it was recognized that poison might be used as a weapon of war and there had been international agreements outlawing the use of such weapons. By the Declaration of the Hague of 29 July 1899 the great Powers had agreed 'to abstain from the use of projectiles the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases'. This ban was renewed in the International Declaration of 1907 which resulted from the Second Peace Conference at the Hague.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this moral condemnation of gas weapons, Britain went into the Great War having established no organization for

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<sup>1</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 535-B, 21 November 1924



chemical warfare research. The extent to which it had ignored the potential of chemical warfare is revealed by the proposal in December 1914 to employ "stink bombs". This weapon would not have infringed the 1899 and 1907 Conventions because the bombs would have contained non-poisonous materials.<sup>2</sup> Against this background it is hardly surprising that the use of gas by the Germans on 22 April 1915 during the second Battle of Ypres should have seemed so shocking. On 23 April, General Sir John French telegraphed the War Office from the Western Front reporting the German action and requesting that he be supplied, as soon as possible, with gas weapons with which to retaliate. In his reply of 24 April, Lord Kitchener stated that, as the use of gas was contrary to the rules of war, he would have to submit the matter to the Government before he could comply with the request. Kitchener was outraged by the German action and described the possibility of Britain using gas weapons as falling 'to the level of the degraded German'. As far as Kitchener was concerned the German methods 'show to what depths of infamy our enemies will go, in order to supplement their want of courage in facing our troops'.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Kitchener's abhorrence of the weapon, the British Government rapidly authorized the use of gas in warfare and on 3 May 1915 the task of providing for the use of offensive gas was given to a sub-section of the Fortifications and Works Directorate of the War Office. For Britain this marked the beginning of chemical warfare. On 28 May 1915 the Ministry of Munitions was formed and within a year it had taken over responsibility for the organization of Britain's chemical warfare capability. This organization grew rapidly with the acquisition of the Porton Experimental Ground near Salisbury in

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<sup>2</sup>WO33/987B: 1st Annual Report of the CWC, 1921

<sup>3</sup>WO142/241: telegraph from French to Kitchener, 23 April and from Kitchener to French, 24 April 1915

January 1916 and the formation of the Chemical Warfare Committee (CWC) on 17 October 1917.<sup>4</sup>

The use of gas in warfare was still a cause of moral repugnance nearly three years after the German action in the Ypres Salient. Early in March 1918 the International Red Cross called on the belligerents to stop using such weapons. In order to determine their response to this call, the Allies held a Conference at Versailles and declared that it would only be appropriate to stop using poison gas if the German Government provided 'new detailed and effective guarantees that an agreement to discontinue the use of gas will be observed'.<sup>5</sup> The Allies held that until such guarantees were provided, Allied use of gas was justified as retaliation against the German use and that it would clearly be useless for the Allies to abandon the use of gas when there was no guarantee that the Germans would not use this weapon when it suited their purposes. This war-time position remained the basis of the British Government's peace time policy regarding chemical warfare: until such time as effective guarantees against gas research and chemical weapons could be established it was impossible for the Government to terminate its chemical warfare organization. Even at this relatively early stage in the development of Britain's chemical warfare policy there was, however, a very different policy being advocated. A War Office memorandum written in late December 1918 suggested that a possible result of the Peace Conference would be that all armies would be reduced to relatively small professional organizations. If that were to be the case, these small armies would have to become more scientific so as to counter-balance the restriction on their numbers. One aspect of this scientific approach to warfare would be the use of gas which, if developed effectively together with tanks and aircraft, could

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<sup>4</sup>WO33/987B: 1st Annual Report of the CWC, 1921

<sup>5</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 535-B, 21 November 1924

have a devastating effect in battle. The writer held that international Conventions would not protect armies against the use of gas. Instead, the best means by which to prevent loss of life as a result of gas weapons was precisely the opposite of that proposed by those who sought international agreements to outlaw the use of gas:

If the humanitarian wishes to render impossible such an action [the destruction of an army by chemical weapons] ...his surest method is to encourage the use of gas in war in place of inducing nations to declare it illegal, for if all armies are prepared to use gas as a weapon they will be equally prepared to protect themselves against its effect.<sup>6</sup>

At this stage such an argument won little favour with the British Government, for when the war ended the legitimacy of gas as a weapon was seriously questioned. This caused problems for the CWC which considered that the developments in chemical weapons since 1915 indicated that this would be an important element in any future wars. The CWC did not want research to be stopped for if this were to happen the experience gained during the war would be lost and continuity would be crucially interrupted.<sup>7</sup> Article 171 of the Treaty of Versailles, however, forbade the Germans from using, manufacturing or importing poisonous gases and liquids. This article obviously raised the question of how far the Allied Powers were morally bound themselves to desist from research and preparation regarding chemical warfare. For the British Government much would depend on the attitude of the other Powers. Soon after

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<sup>6</sup>WO188/143: 'The development of gas and its influence on tank warfare', 21 December 1918

<sup>7</sup>WO33/987B: 1st Annual Report of the CWC, 1921

the Treaty of Versailles was signed it became clear that none of the major Powers intended to bring a halt to their chemical warfare preparations. The War Cabinet decided, therefore, that the War Office should continue its work on the use of asphyxiating gases in warfare but without denouncing the Conventions of 1899 and 1907.<sup>8</sup>

Early in 1920 the issue was raised once again within the Cabinet because the War Office sought a decision on the use of animals in chemical warfare research. This was not a simple matter for the Home Secretary to resolve and it proved necessary for him to consult the Crown's Law Officers to determine whether the use of animals in chemical warfare research was covered by the Vivisection Act. The general view within the Cabinet at this stage, however, still favoured the War Cabinet decision of October 1919.<sup>9</sup> On 4 March 1920 the Cabinet considered a memorandum by the Home Secretary which gave the Law Officers' advice that the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876 allowed such experiments and did not prevent the Home Secretary from issuing the appropriate licences. This advice, however, meant that the question of chemical warfare research was one of policy which the Cabinet would have to decide. During the course of the discussion which followed, two rather different arguments were put. That which might be described as the realist position held that 'nothing was more likely to prevent wars in future than the realisation on the part of the people that such wars would be fought by ruthless methods of wholesale extermination by gases'. In support of this view it was stated that both France and the USA were 'already making arrangements on a large scale to study chemical warfare, and that we could not allow ourselves to fall behind'. It was also pointed out, however, that the Versailles Peace Treaty condemned gas

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<sup>8</sup>Cab23/12: Cabinet conclusions, 16 October 1919

<sup>9</sup>Cab23/20: Cabinet conclusions, 3 February 1920

warfare and prohibited Germany from making preparations for gas warfare and from resorting to gas as a weapon. 'In view of this provision, were we ourselves justified in conducting similar researches which we condemned in the case of the Germans ?' The Cabinet response to these important questions was to prevaricate. The matter was to be referred to the League and the British representative there was given instructions as to the policy which the Cabinet wished to present:

[he] should indicate the view of the Government to be that this new method of warfare ought never to have been employed; that we should rejoice to see it stopped; that if it is not stopped it would be necessary for us, in self-defence to keep abreast of other countries in research and preparations in order to defend our soldiers and mete reprisals: at the same time, the Government hopes that the League of Nations will discover an effective means of putting an end to such warfare.

Until such time as the League considered the matter and the Cabinet was able to make a final decision, the Secretary of State for War was authorized to continue chemical warfare research but 'on the narrowest possible scale and in the most unobtrusive manner'.<sup>10</sup>

The tone of these discussions and the interim decisions taken reflect an unedifying mixture of uncertainty and cynicism. From a realist perspective it might be argued that this was in Britain's best interests in that the country's security would be endangered if it terminated chemical warfare research at a time when other major Powers apparently had every intention of intensifying

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<sup>10</sup>Cab23/20: Cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1920

their research. In providing Britain's representative at the League with such instructions, however, the Cabinet was giving public approval to a policy which it appeared privately to consider unachievable. There were other policies which the Government might have pursued had it possessed the necessary courage and qualities of leadership. An idealist approach would have required the Government to declare its support for the existing Conventions condemning the use of gas weapons, to suspend all chemical warfare research and to make genuine efforts to achieve chemical warfare disarmament through the League. Britain was one of the leading members of the League and could justifiably have been expected to play a leading role in seeking to resolve a complex problem. A crucial element, however, in arms limitation agreements is verifiability and there was general agreement in the post-war period that it would be impossible to prevent secret chemical weapons research and manufacture. Further, the experience of the Great War had shown that chemical weapons could, in certain circumstances, be effective. If the Cabinet took the view, therefore, that chemical weapons disarmament was not only impossible but undesirable for military reasons, it should have repudiated the existing Conventions because they were worthless and set about initiating a programme of public education designed to prove that chemical weapons were not morally inferior to other types of weapons. In defence of the Cabinet's decision of 4 March 1920, it could be argued that uncertainty was inevitable given that the war had only finished recently, that it was unclear whether the USA would ratify the Versailles Treaty and that the League was in its infancy. Uncertainty and cynicism remained, however, the defining qualities in the Government's handling of the question of chemical warfare during the next five years.

The Cabinet decision of 4 March 1920 regarding chemical warfare policy was the starting point for a serious debate on this issue within the Government

during the following summer. Within both the War Office and the Admiralty there was considerable dissatisfaction and in a memorandum of 3 May 1920, covering a memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, the Secretary of State for War, Winston Churchill, asserted that the Government's 'indeterminate policy' was placing Britain at a disadvantage compared with the other major Powers.<sup>11</sup> In his own memorandum Wilson attempted to make a powerful case for Britain accepting gas as a legitimate weapon of war. The Great War, he argued, had shown that gas was an effective weapon and history demonstrated that it was impossible 'to prevent an effective weapon being used once it has proved its value'. Its likely importance in future wars was considered to be demonstrated by the fact that the USA had voted to spend £26m on gas warfare and had already spent half that sum. This was two hundred and fifty times greater than the £52,000 allocated by Britain for chemical warfare research in the financial year 1920-21. Although Wilson did not know as much about French preparations for gas warfare, he claimed they were studying the matter 'very seriously'. A further danger for Britain was that Germany had a very large peace-time chemical industry so that, although its gas warfare installations had been destroyed, it would always be in a position speedily to convert the products of the industry for military purposes. Wilson held that it was entirely inappropriate to argue that Britain could not denounce the Germans for having used gas in the war and then prepare to use it itself in some future conflict. This was because the German crime, in his opinion, lay not in its use of gas but in its unilateral repudiation of an international Convention. Wilson also sought to make a case for the use of gas on the ground that it was very far from being a cruel and inhuman weapon. Statistics from both Britain

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<sup>11</sup>Cab24/105: CP1211, 3 May 1920

and the USA showed that only 3–4% of gas casualties in the war had died whereas at least 20% of the casualties of other weapons had proved fatal. The CIGS even attempted to make out a case for chemical weapons reducing the level of brutality in war in that they provided 'a means of "doping" an opponent and thus putting him *hors de combat* while attaining one's object; in fact, it is a truer conception of *modern* gases to consider them as drugs rather than as poisons'.<sup>12</sup> Wilson contradicted this aspect of his own argument, however, by stating that if Britain did not take a positive line in favour of chemical weapons there was a serious risk that a large number of British lives would be lost in any future war. Wilson was in no doubt, though, that the Government should take the initiative and seek to educate public opinion in favour of the use of gas as a weapon. The only constraint on gas warfare should be financial. The view of Britain's senior military officer, therefore, was that Britain should repudiate the Conventions of 1899 and 1907 which had been effectively over-taken by scientific developments and the events of the war.<sup>13</sup>

In advancing this policy Wilson received strong support from the First Sea Lord, Earl Beatty, who wanted the Navy to have the capability to develop and manufacture both gas shells and anti-gas equipment. Beatty considered that the Government's policy on chemical warfare was placing the Navy at a disadvantage, particularly in comparison with that of the USA which, he reported, had already developed gas weapons. Beatty was clearly angered by the US Government which, 'having inoculated Europe with the idea of a League of Nations, have since approved the adoption in practice of an entirely opposite doctrine, viz : rapid, thorough and vast preparations for War'.<sup>14</sup> When, however,

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<sup>12</sup>Cab24/105: CP1211, 16 April 1920. Italics original.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Cab24/105: CP1246, 7 May 1920. Underlining original.



the War Office and Admiralty arguments were considered in the Cabinet on 12 May 1920, the Government declined to pursue the policy advocated by these two Service Departments and maintained the same indecisive line which it had taken since the end of the war. There remained general agreement that Britain should not enter into an international agreement on chemical weapons unless it could be sure that there were effective means in place to ensure that no country, whether a member of the League or not, could secretly prepare to break it. It was also pointed out, though, that if some limitation were not placed upon chemical warfare, 'there would be no limit to the destructiveness not merely to armies but also to civil populations from the employment of bacteriological and other poisonous methods'.<sup>15</sup> At this time Balfour was attending a meeting of the League Council as Britain's representative, and it was decided that the question should be reviewed by the Cabinet once he returned. Hankey had drafted a note to the League which was intended to be a statement of the Government's position. It highlighted the continuing uncertainty within the Cabinet:

The British Government are advised that if they desire to be free to use poison gas in the event of war, it would be necessary for them to renounce the Land War Convention and the Declaration of 1907.... They are, however, most reluctant to take so drastic a step, as they hold the view that this new method of warfare ought never to have been employed and they would rejoice to see it put an end to. Article 171 of the Treaty of Versailles ... begins with the statement that the use of these gases is prohibited and in these circumstances, the

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<sup>15</sup>Cab23/21: Cabinet conclusions, 12 May 1920

British Government feel that the Allies are morally bound to do all in their power to prohibit their use.

On the other hand, unless the prohibition of these gases is universal among all the nations of the world, no country could afford to abandon the experiment nor the equipment of its forces with these gases. In self-defence every nation will be bound to do its best to keep abreast with other countries in research and preparations in order to defend its soldiers and place itself in a position to undertake reprisals.<sup>16</sup>

Uncertainty was added to uncertainty by the Cabinet's delay in making a final decision on whether or not to send this note to the League: Hankey was only instructed to send Balfour a summary of the main points of the Cabinet's discussion and to ask him to inquire informally as to the likely attitude of the League Council. There was still no sign of the British Government attempting to provide a lead. In the meantime the War Office was authorized to continue with its chemical warfare research.<sup>17</sup>

The attitude of the two senior Service Departments and the Cabinet decisions of 12 May 1920 appalled Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, and H.A.L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education. Montagu was deeply concerned about two aspects of the Government's emerging chemical warfare policy. First, he saw the contradictory tendency in the War Office argument that gas should be regarded as an acceptable weapon of war and the Cabinet's declaration in the draft note to the League. Montagu believed that in

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<sup>16</sup>Cab24/105: CP1218, 4 May 1920

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

resolving this contradiction, the Government was facing 'a momentous decision' and he was unhesitating in arguing for acceptance of Hankey's draft note to the League on the ground that it would destroy any possibility of Britain's being able to advance the arguments and policy advocated by Wilson and Beatty.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to this objective, however, Montagu considered that the issue of chemical warfare had a direct bearing on India. Montagu was here not concerned with chemical weapons as an element in British disarmament policy but as a factor in the internal armaments policy of the Empire. Montagu entirely rejected the idea that gas should be used against frontier tribesmen or against Afghans except as a measure of retaliation and he gave two closely connected reasons why the use of gas would be disadvantageous to the British position in India. First, Britain's 'clean methods of fighting and our humanity to prisoners of war in these regions in the past have bred a certain measure of humanity in the enemy, and our higher standards of conduct have tended to raise those of our uncivilised neighbours'. This was an improvement from which, he argued, Britain had benefited for it wished to be on friendly terms with these neighbours and might even have to bring them under British rule. Second, Montagu took the view that if Britain were to use gas in India, it would lower its prestige and 'leave behind a heritage of resentment and revengefulness from which we ourselves shall be the first to suffer'. This resentment would be particularly powerful given Britain's strong denunciation of the German use of gas in 1915.<sup>19</sup>

He wanted the Cabinet, therefore, to reject Wilson's proposal that gas should be accepted as a legitimate weapon and to leave it to the Secretary of State for India to decide whether gas warfare should be prosecuted in the sub-continent. This last point, however, makes it clear that Montagu, for all his

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<sup>18</sup>Cab24/105: CP 1278, 12 May 1920

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

hostility to the use of gas in India, held that it was necessary for the Indian Government to have a chemical warfare capacity and he declared that he had instructed it 'to prosecute it on a limited scale and in an unobtrusive manner'. Montagu must, therefore, be placed in the intermediate category of those who opposed Britain initiating chemical warfare but who believed that it should have the ability to respond in like manner if gas were used against it. He was much more concerned with maintaining the military independence of the Indian Government from the authority of the War Office than he was with the issue of chemical warfare in the debate about British disarmament policy.<sup>20</sup>

The one voice within the Cabinet raised in favour of Britain unambiguously taking the lead in chemical warfare disarmament was that of Fisher. His position was that of an idealist in that he wanted Britain to suspend its work on chemical warfare until all possibilities of ending or limiting it had been thoroughly considered and to make a serious attempt through direct negotiation with other Powers or through the League to achieve this end. In advocating this course, Fisher rejected the principal arguments advanced in favour of chemical weapons. They would not be cheap because '...all experience shows that a new development in the art of war invariably involves additional cost'; and they were not humane because they were capable of development in such a way that they could be used against civilian populations. While he recognized that research into chemical weapons would almost certainly be impossible to prevent, he thought that it would be possible to identify if an army were making serious preparations to use gas warfare techniques:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

There is no country in the world in which a million men can be made to undergo a particular kind of discipline in secret. If, therefore, the Governments of the Great Powers were to undertake to abstain from preparing chemical warfare and were to break their undertaking, the fact would certainly become known.

Although Fisher's position was that of an idealist, this does not mean that his understanding of nations and their armaments policies was unrealistic. He explicitly recognized that gas warfare might be too attractive to nations to persuade them to abstain from developing and using it. He considered, however, that the end of the war offered time and opportunity for chemical warfare disarmament to be achieved and he was deeply opposed to allowing the initiative within the British Government to fall into the hands of the Service Departments:

I do not think that we should be hurried by our Naval and Military Advisers into a precipitate acceptance of innovations which we have more than once condemned, which we have forbidden to the Germans, which are repugnant to the feelings of the great mass of our people, and which are easily capable of developments from which the imagination recoils.<sup>21</sup>

These memoranda from Montagu and Fisher initiated a brief but serious debate within the Government about chemical warfare, and during the course of the summer there were three further Cabinet papers dealing with the issue.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Cab24/106: CP1301, 17 May 1920

<sup>22</sup>Cab24/107: CP1496, June 1920; Cab24/108: CP1538, 23 June 1920; Cab24/110: CP1758, 7 August 1920

Wilson sought to answer Fisher's attack on the views of the Service Departments. The central feature in Fisher's argument was that, while it would be impossible to prevent Powers from secretly conducting chemical warfare research, no country would be able secretly to train a substantial army in the techniques of gas warfare. Wilson argued in response that it would be possible to delay training troops in the techniques of gas warfare until war had started so that a Power could then take advantage of its secret research which had been conducted in the years before the outbreak of war. This point is hardly convincing given that a memorandum produced by the CWC stated that the organization of both defensive and counter-offensive measures could not be left until war was declared.<sup>23</sup> Wilson also attacked very strongly the Fisher thesis that as Britain did not intend to go to war in the near future, there would be plenty of time to develop knowledge of gas warfare should the need arise. In response to this Wilson made two telling points. First, this point could equally well be made about the development of any weapon. Second, war might be forced upon Britain: it did not have to be a development which it was actively seeking. Wilson's realist advice to the Government remained that Britain could not await the outcome of League deliberations before developing its chemical warfare capacity.

Certain points of fact, however, concerning fighting in India which Wilson made in support of his position were challenged by Montagu. Wilson had asserted that lives had been sacrificed in India because of the refusal to use gas and he specifically referred to the capture of the Afghan fort of Spin Baldak on 27 May 1919. In his paper Montagu stated that the capture of this fort occurred

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<sup>23</sup>WO188/144: undated memorandum in file headed 'Policy in regard to research work in connection with gas warfare and state of preparedness of the Fighting Services 1922-1924'

only seventeen days after the first suggestion made by the War Office in a telegram to the Commander-in-Chief dated 10 May, that gas might be useful in India. It was only on 11 June 1919 that Brigadier-General Charles Foulkes, Director of Gas Services for the British Armies in France from 1917 to 1918 and President of the Chemical Warfare Committee from 1918 to 1921, left for India with gas samples whose utility he intended to test under Indian conditions. As regards the casualties incurred in taking the fort of Spin Baldak and the fortified hills to the north east of it, Montagu gave these as 18 killed and nineteen wounded rather than the '40-50 casualties' referred to in Wilson's memorandum.<sup>24</sup> Just as the CIGS was being challenged on matters of detail, so also were the War Office's details of American spending on chemical warfare research. Rather than Wilson's earlier claim that the USA had already spent half of the £26m allocated to chemical warfare research in late 1918, Churchill stated that they 'appear actually to have spent at least a quarter of this sum since the war' and that £1m would be available to the chemical warfare establishment in America for 1921. Churchill's memorandum revealed that Wilson's original figures had been challenged both before they were put to the Cabinet and subsequently. Despite obviously having been thrown on to the defensive, however, Churchill sought to regain ground for his Department's case by pointing out that the American Chemical Warfare Services had 100 officers and 1,200 other ranks whereas Britain had as yet no such peace establishment - though he hoped to gain authority for about 21 officers and 209 other ranks. Further, whereas the Edgewood Arsenal in the USA had the capacity to produce 250 tons of gas daily, Britain could only produce 10 tons of gas daily.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Cab24/105: CP1211, 16 April 1920

<sup>25</sup>Cab24/110: CP1758, 7 August 1920

These papers, which were submitted to the Cabinet between April and August 1920, reveal that there were serious differences of opinion about the policy which the British Government should be advancing regarding chemical warfare. Wilson, Beatty and Churchill saw the matter as being a crucial element in Britain's armaments policy and of vital importance for the country's security. They had no faith in the possibility of international agreement securing chemical warfare disarmament: any such agreement, they held, would be fraught with danger for Britain because it would be impossible to prevent Powers conducting secret research. Fisher, however, believed that chemical warfare was an evil which the British Government should commit itself to eradicating through international discussion and negotiation. He was, therefore, the protagonist of chemical weapons disarmament. While this debate was taking place within the British Government, the newly established League was beginning to examine the issue.

In May 1920, as the debate on chemical warfare was beginning within the British Government, the League Council was meeting in Rome and, at its meeting of 19 May 1920, it passed a resolution establishing the PAC. This new body was constituted under Article IX of the Covenant to advise the Council on military, naval and air questions generally and on disarmament in particular. It was composed of Service delegates only and therefore had a vested interest in the subjects under discussion.

Balfour, Britain's representative on the Council at the Rome meeting, gained authority to submit a questionnaire regarding chemical weapons to the PAC.<sup>26</sup> The questionnaire asked the PAC whether gas was a fundamentally cruel weapon, whether there should be a limitation of the quantity of gas which could

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<sup>26</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 535-B, 21 November 1924



be used in war, whether there were effective measures by which the use of gas could be prevented and whether it was possible to prevent gas experiments and manufacture. The PAC was also invited to give its opinion on international regulations concerning chemical warfare. This last question the PAC considered to be political and so beyond its competence as a purely technical commission. Its response to the other questions, however, was presented to the Council on 22 October and discussed at the meeting of the Council on 25 October.

The PAC's conclusion was that gas was a cruel weapon but that it was no more cruel than some other methods of waging war so long as it was used only against combatants; in contrast the use of gas against non-combatants was both cruel and unacceptable. In answer, however, to a question from Balfour during the Council's discussion, the President of the PAC, Brigadier General Clive, stated that gas weapons must be regarded as inhumane because they harmed civilians and because their use could not be limited to a particular area. The PAC also stated that it would be impossible to prevent the research and manufacture of poisonous gases during peace time. In the light of this Balfour stated that any international ban which the Council might impose on chemical weapons would disadvantage honest nations because the unscrupulous Powers would continue their chemical warfare preparations in secret.<sup>27</sup> He suggested, therefore, that it might be better for the Council to ignore the question altogether. This view, however, was rejected by the President of the Council, Léon Bourgeois, because the Press knew that the PAC was considering the question. Accordingly, the Council decided to condemn the use of poisonous gas, to ask the PAC to consider what methods might be used to control the production of gas weapons and to invite the Governments of member states to

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<sup>27</sup>Balfour doubtless placed Britain in the category of 'honest nation'!

consider what penalties might be used against those Powers which used such weapons.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas 1920 saw considerable attention given to the question of chemical warfare both within the British Government and the League, in 1921 the subject was pushed to one side. To all intents and purposes realism had won within the Cabinet since chemical warfare preparation went ahead and efforts to achieve an international ban were notable by their absence; and a lack of imagination and energy appeared to have emerged within the League. Although the First League Assembly in 1920 had authorized the Council to establish the TMC, which would be a non-technical body whose task would be to submit disarmament proposals, this held no meetings before July 1921. The performance of the PAC was also disappointing to the extent that, at the Second League Assembly in 1921, Lord Robert Cecil, speaking as a representative of the South African Government, questioned whether the continuance of the PAC served any useful purpose.<sup>29</sup> The only initiative which was taken came through the work of the Third Committee. The Third Committee's *rapporteur* was Cecil and its report was presented to the Assembly on 27 September.<sup>30</sup> When the report was discussed by the Assembly on 1 October, Cecil explained that the Committee wanted the TMC to consider whether an appeal could be made to scientists engaged in gas warfare research to ensure that their studies were published. Here was a clear expression of one of the principles on which the League was founded - the belief that public opinion and open debate could play a beneficial role in international relations - and it was entirely in keeping with

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<sup>28</sup>FO371/5482: Procès-Verbal of the 10th Session of the Council of the League of Nations, 20-28 October 1920

<sup>29</sup>FO371/7062: verbatim record of the 6th Plenary Meeting of the Second League Assembly, 8 September 1921

<sup>30</sup>FO371/7056: Report by the Third Committee of the Second League Assembly, 'Reduction of Armaments', 27 September 1921

this idea that Cecil should think that if knowledge of chemical warfare research were made public, this might deter nations from using gas. In pursuit of this objective the TMC invited the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation to consider the matter, but on 5 August 1922 this Committee reported that it was unable to suggest any methods by which scientists throughout the world could be induced to publish their findings relating to chemical warfare.<sup>31</sup>

Despite this setback, again at Cecil's suggestion, the TMC appointed a special committee to consider collecting and publishing information about the results of the manufacture and use of new methods of war. This would include the growth in the destructive power of bombs as well as developments in poison, chemical and bacteriological warfare. This special committee finally submitted its report, written by Colonel Réquin, a French member of the TMC, directly to the Council in autumn 1924. It contained the opinions of seven leading scientists from Europe and North America but offered no new insights on chemical warfare. It could only note that Powers possessing chemical weapons might chose to use them against civilians as well as against troops; thus it was important to recognize 'the vital danger to which a nation would expose itself if it were lulled into security by over confidence in international treaties and conventions'.<sup>32</sup> This conclusion to Réquin's report explicitly called into question the value of international treaties in regulating chemical warfare, revealing the enormous problems which this issue caused for those committed to disarmament. As will be seen, however, it did not prevent the League making a further attempt at chemical disarmament in 1925; and in any case, by the time the Réquin report was written, developments within the League had been overtaken by an American initiative at the Washington Conference in 1921-22.

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<sup>31</sup> Adm116/2142: Report of the TMC, 7 September 1922

<sup>32</sup> WO188/144: Report of the TMC, 30 July 1924

The principal purpose of the Washington Conference was to establish a naval arms control agreement and it is on this aspect of the Conference that most attention has been focused. Indeed, the most recent publication on the Conference makes only one brief reference to the chemical warfare Resolution which was adopted unanimously on 7 January 1922.<sup>33</sup> This Resolution caused some difficulties for Balfour, the head of the British delegation, and forced the issue of chemical warfare back on to the Government's agenda. In general, Britain's preparations for the Conference, although limited, were flexible; but on the narrow issue of the regulation or limitation of methods of war, the Cabinet, acting on a CID recommendation, had laid down that all attempts to raise the issue should be resisted.<sup>34</sup> Balfour hoped that the Conference would not consider poisonous gas but on 6 January 1922 a member of the US delegation, ex-Secretary of State Elihu Root, sprung upon the Conference a Resolution closely modelled on Article 171 of the Treaty of Versailles:

The use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous and other gases, and all analogous liquids or material or devices, having been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world, and a prohibition of such use having been declared in treaties to which a majority of the civilized powers are parties;

Now to the end that this prohibition shall be universally accepted as a part of international law, binding alike the conscience and practice

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<sup>33</sup>Goldstein, E. and Maurer, J. (eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-22 - Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994)

<sup>34</sup>Erik Goldstein, 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference' in *ibid.*, pp.4-34; Cab23/27: Cabinet conclusions, 1 November 1921; Cab4/7: CID memorandum 280-B, 24 October 1921

of nations, the Signatory Powers declare their assent to such prohibition, agree to be bound thereby between themselves, and invite all other civilized nations to adhere thereto.<sup>35</sup>

In his communications with the Government on this Resolution, Balfour provided an interesting distinction between the technical side and the political side of the question. As far as he was concerned, the technical side was relatively simple. It was impossible for an international treaty to prevent the building of factories which would produce materials which had a legitimate peaceful application yet which could be used also to produce poisonous gases. Likewise, it was impossible to prevent the discovery of new gases. In this situation, no country could make its safety dependent on other countries abiding by rules which they had promised to observe. It followed, therefore, that whether the Conference condemned gas or not, Britain would still have to take action to ensure that it could defend itself against gas attack. On the basis of this analysis, it would have been logical for Balfour to assert publicly that the Root chemical warfare Resolution was meaningless but the Root Resolution had political implications of which Balfour was only too aware. Simply because the Resolution was a reaffirmation of the principle which had been expressed in the Conventions concluded at the two Hague Conferences in 1899 and 1907, in the declaration by the Allied and Associated Powers on 25 March 1918 and in Article 171 of the Versailles Treaty, to have rejected it in direct opposition to American and Dominion opinion at Washington would have been politically impossible:

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<sup>35</sup>WO33/1014: 2nd Report of the CWC, 1922

If [the] British delegation were to resist on some technical grounds a policy which, on every other ground, they would like to see made effective, their position will be hopeless. They will be charged with appealing to sentiments of humanity when it suits them - as it does in the case of submarines - and being indifferent or hostile when their interests are not especially concerned. It may well be that [the] French and Japanese will follow [the] American example and accept [the] American scheme. In that case its rejection will justly be laid wholly at our door and an intolerable situation will be created.<sup>36</sup>

The tone of Balfour's telegram indicates that his main concern was to prevent Britain facing international criticism for taking an indifferent attitude to the question of chemical warfare. The Washington Conference may have taken place outside the framework of the League, but the League notion that diplomacy should be subject to the scrutiny of public opinion appears to have been a significant factor in Balfour's thinking. There was considerable hope within the League that the Washington Conference would stimulate progress towards chemical disarmament, and the TMC suspended its inquiry into the subject until they had received details of the agreement concluded at Washington.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the chemical warfare establishment in Britain was right in stating that the Root Resolution, which was translated into treaty form at Washington, did not in itself change British armaments policy, as distinct from disarmament policy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Cab4/7: CID memorandum 327-B, 7 January 1922

<sup>37</sup>FO371/8317: memorandum by Wigram, 4 April 1922

<sup>38</sup>WO33/1028 : 3rd Report of the CWC, 1923

Throughout 1921 the British Government had largely ignored the subject of chemical warfare, allowing the CWC to continue its work under the indeterminate policy so strongly criticized by the War Office in 1920. The unanimous acceptance at the Washington Conference of the Root Resolution, however, resulted in chemical warfare once again being considered by the British Government. In the early months of 1922 the Treasury sought to persuade the Government to reduce the scale of its chemical warfare research and to put pressure on other Powers to do the same. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Horne, was especially concerned that the War Office wanted to expand the staff at the Porton Experimental Station and to purchase land which had been devastated by gas experiments. He was 'most reluctant to sanction expenditure on a constantly developing service, without any limit of time, one effect of which...must be to lead other Powers to continue experiments possibly not purely defensive'.<sup>39</sup> Horne was not advocating chemical disarmament; rather he was motivated by domestic financial considerations and his principal concern was to bring about a reduction in the cost of Britain's armaments policy. What interested him most, therefore, was the outcome of the policy which he supported, not the means by which it was achieved. The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Sir Alfred Chatfield, a member of the British delegation at the Washington Conference, had anticipated this reaction by the Chancellor and had tried to forestall it by advising, at Washington, that the Root Resolution should be amended in such a way as to make it clear that the signatory Powers were permitted to carry out chemical warfare research. He had been over-ruled, however, by Balfour.<sup>40</sup> Within the CID the Treasury argument was advanced by George Barstow, Controller of the Supply Services Branch.

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<sup>39</sup>Cab24/137: CP4054, 22 June 1922

<sup>40</sup>Adm1/8621/40: minute by Chatfield, 28 June 1922

Barstow 'dominated the Treasury's views on service issues'<sup>41</sup> but within the CID there was overwhelming opposition to him on this subject. Churchill, now Secretary of State for the Colonies, Worthington-Evans, Secretary of State for War, Lord Lee of Fareham, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, Deputy CIGS, rejected the Treasury argument. In addition to the familiar points in favour of defensive chemical research, it was pointed out that neither Germany nor the Soviet Union was bound by the Washington Convention. As these two Powers were not members of the League, it would be practically impossible to ask them to stop their work on gas warfare. Even though Germany was already bound by the Versailles Treaty, these arguments were sufficient for the CID to recommend that the War Office should be allowed to continue their chemical research. The Treasury gave way and on 22 September 1922 approved the continuation of research into defensive methods which could 'include such offensive research and experiments as are necessary to ensure that protective measures are adequate'.<sup>42</sup>

Following the defeat of the Treasury's brief attempt to prevent the expansion of Britain's chemical warfare research, the issue disappeared from the Government's agenda until early in 1924. Whereas previously the initiative had been taken by those who, for differing reasons, were opposed to the development of Britain's chemical warfare capacity, its re-emergence as an issue of some importance was the result of a War Office attempt to persuade the new Labour Administration to strengthen what it claimed to be the essentially defensive nature of the country's policy. This began with a CID paper written by Lord Cavan, the CIGS, arguing that since the Washington Treaty, Britain had

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<sup>41</sup>Ferris, *op.cit.*, p.5

<sup>42</sup>Cab2/3: CID minutes, 28 July 1922; Cab4/8: CID memoranda 354-B, 19 July 1922, and 355-B, 17 July 1922; WO33/1028: 3rd Annual Report of the CWC; Cab24/137: CP4054, 22 June 1922



fallen behind the major powers - Italy, Germany, Roumania, the Soviet Union, the USA and France - in its capacity to fight gas wars.<sup>43</sup> Subsequent discussion within the CID revealed wide-ranging concern about the inadequacy of Britain's capacity to defend both its troops and its civilians from gas attack. Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Birch, Master-General of the Ordnance (MGO), who was responsible for research and development in chemical warfare, complained at the inadequacy of the sums allocated to him: in the current estimates Birch had hoped to get £35,000 but he had been held to the sum of £26,000 which had been allocated for research in the previous year. Cavan pointed out that shortages of money meant that the War Office had had to close gas chambers which were essential if troops were to be properly trained. He also drew attention to the fact that the Indian Government had abolished the post of Gas Adviser to the Indian army and that all gas training establishments in India had been closed. This meant that when reservists returned to Britain from India, they had had no training in anti-gas drill.<sup>44</sup>

Cavan believed that the first step to remedying these problems, as the War Office saw them, was to change what might be described as the chemical warfare culture which prevailed within the British Government. He wanted authority to insert in the Field Service Regulations and other training manuals of the British Army a statement based on that which appeared at the beginning of the French Field Service Regulations. This stated that, in the event of war, the French would seek an agreement between the combatants not to use gas as a weapon of war but, if such agreement proved impossible to achieve, they would consider themselves free 'to act according to circumstances'. Two of the most influential non-Service members of the CID, Lord Haldane, Lord Chancellor and

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<sup>43</sup>Cab4/11: CID memorandum 483-B, 23 February 1924

<sup>44</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 3 April 1924

Chairman of the CID, and Warren Fisher, Secretary to the Treasury, were more concerned, however, about the efficiency of gas masks within the Fighting Services and their availability to the civilian population should the country be threatened with a gas attack. There was general agreement within the CID that all these matters needed attention and recommendations to this effect were made. In a telling observation, however, Fisher commented:

...that it was undesirable to call attention to an increase in expenditure in the direction of experiments in gas warfare. He considered that the form of presentation of such expenditure in the Estimates might be adjusted so as not to call undue attention to the fact that we were carrying out experiments in this direction.<sup>45</sup>

For all their conviction of the need for a change in policy in a realist direction, leading decision-makers were no more willing to attempt to lead public opinion than they had been in 1920 when Wilson and H.A.L. Fisher had made diametrically opposed proposals to the Cabinet.

Following this meeting of the CID, Birch called a meeting of the CWC on 15 May 1924 which was attended by representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Committee was confident that the gas masks issued to the Armed Forces were adequate to defend them against all the gases which other Powers might use. It reported, however, that while anti-gas training in the Navy was adequate, it was inadequate in the Army and the Air Force. This problem could only be overcome if thorough anti-gas training measures were introduced and this would necessitate the re-opening of gas chambers. The cost of putting these

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

measures into effect would be £110,000 in capital expenditure and £85,000 in additional annual expenditure. As regards the provision of gas masks for the civilian population, the Committee recommended that the Government establish a factory for this purpose, capable of the necessary expansion should the need arise. These recommendations were embodied in a memorandum by Birch and approved by the CID at its meeting of 28 July 1924.<sup>46</sup> At this stage the War Office's objective was to win authority to spend more money on research in defensive methods of gas warfare. At the same time, however, a quite different policy began to emerge.

In its 4th Annual Report covering the period to 31 March 1924, the CWC expressed uncertainty as to whether existing policy allowed them to make preparations for the large scale manufacture of gas and its rapid use against an enemy acting in breach of the Washington Treaty. At this time Britain had no stocks of gas shell or other offensive gas weapons, all these having been disposed of following the Washington Treaty.<sup>47</sup> The Fighting Services thought the situation intolerable and sought to reverse it, the first to take action being the Air Force. At the CID meeting of 3 April 1924, Lord Thomson, Secretary of State for Air in the Labour Government, sought and won approval for experiments to be carried out using gas filled bombs and other apparatus for dispersing gas from the air. Thomson argued that this was for defensive purposes as such experiments would make it possible to assess the danger to the civilian population which might arise from such an attack.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, it was but a short step from this position to advocacy of a more clearly offensive policy and this occurred in December 1924, following the defeat of the Labour

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<sup>46</sup>Cab4/11: CID memorandum 497-B, 26 May 1924; Cab2/4: CID minutes, 28 July 1924

<sup>47</sup>WO33/1049: 4th Annual Report of the CWC, 1924

<sup>48</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 3 April 1924

Government in the General Election, in the form of CID memoranda from Worthington-Evans, the new Secretary of State for War, Beatty and the Air Staff. Worthington-Evans justified his request for the authority to study the employment of offensive gas on the ground that this was necessary for the development of effective defensive techniques. Beatty's concern was that under the existing War Office proposals, Britain would only have the means to produce gas in bulk if hostilities were to occur. The consequence, argued Beatty, would be a period of from 2 to 3 months - during which Britain was building up its stocks of gas - when the country would be vulnerable to a gas attack against which it could not retaliate. Thus the First Sea Lord wanted policy amended so that the country was committed to holding sufficient stocks of gas to retaliate immediately to a gas attack. More forthrightly, the Air Staff argued that Britain's Armed Services needed an offensive chemical warfare capacity because 'the most practicable and only true deterrent against gas attack is the ability to carry out counter-offensive measures'.<sup>49</sup>

The proposals of the Fighting Services to change policy were discussed at the CID meeting of 5 January 1925, which recommended that the French formula regarding the use of gas be incorporated into the training manuals of the Service Departments. The CID also urged the Government to authorize the study of offensive gas so that immediate retaliation could be carried out if Britain faced a gas attack. This included the necessary preparation for the bulk production of gas and the holding of stocks of gas to bridge the period between an outbreak of hostilities and the beginning of general bulk production.<sup>50</sup> Thus, when the Cabinet approved these recommendations on 18 February 1925, it

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<sup>49</sup>Cab4/12: CID memoranda 546-B, 12 December 1924, 548-B, 18 December 1924, and 552-B, 16 December 1924

<sup>50</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 5 January 1925

appeared that the consideration of chemical warfare policy within the CID during the previous year had resulted in a clear change of emphasis: the CWC had been authorized to base its policy on the development of a counter-offensive capability.<sup>51</sup> For all practical purposes it appeared that the flickering attempts at chemical disarmament in 1920 and 1922 had been extinguished and the primacy of British armaments policy asserted. Further, there was an attempt on the part of the CWC to encourage the development of an imperial chemical warfare capacity which met with some success when Australia established a Chemical Warfare Board.<sup>52</sup>

Ironically, shortly after this change of emphasis in British chemical armaments policy, there was a further attempt to bring about chemical warfare disarmament through the League. Despite the fact that the report of the special committee, established by the TMC to investigate the question of chemical warfare, had concluded that international Conventions could not prevent powers developing a gas warfare capacity, a Gas Protocol emerged from the Arms Traffic Conference held in Geneva in the spring of 1925. This Conference was attended by the representatives of forty-three countries, including Germany and the USA, and its most important outcome was the Geneva (Gas) Protocol of 17 June 1925. By this Protocol the forty-one signatory States agreed to be bound by the existing Conventions prohibiting the use of poison gas in warfare. They also agreed to make every effort to persuade other countries to accept the Protocol.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Cab23/49: Cabinet conclusions, 18 February 1925

<sup>52</sup>WO33/1078: 5th Annual Report of the CWC, 28 May 1925

<sup>53</sup>Protocol for the Prohibition of the use in war of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, Geneva, June 17 1925, Cmd. 3604 of 1925

Although the CWC rightly observed that the Geneva (Gas) Protocol in no way changed Britain's chemical warfare policy, it caused alarm within the War Office.<sup>54</sup> In the CID, Worthington-Evans argued that Britain should not ratify the Protocol because, if it were to do so, 'her actions in the future would be tied to a certain extent, while any Power who refused ratification would be free to develop chemical warfare to any extent desired'. He was wholly wrong in making this point, as the Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, pointed out because the Protocol was only binding on other nations who had signed the Protocol and who abided by it; there was nothing in the Protocol to prevent chemical warfare research and preparations to use gas weapons in retaliation against such an attack. Nevertheless, Worthington-Evans had the support of Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for Air, and William Bridgeman, First Lord of the Admiralty, in advancing once again the argument that gas was a more humane method of war than high explosives and Lord Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, claimed that it could be very useful against frontier tribesmen who had become accustomed to bomber attacks and simply hid in caves at the first sight of aeroplanes. These views did not prevail, though, against the opinion of Chamberlain, who pointed out that repudiation of the Protocol meant going back on the Washington Treaty and the other Conventions against the use of poisonous gas. To have taken the path recommended by Worthington-Evans and to have declared gas a legitimate weapon of war would have amounted to 'a complete somersault', an acrobatic manoeuvre unacceptable to public opinion. There was no need for the Government to incur the displeasure of public opinion by rejecting a Protocol which did not interfere with its policy as regards chemical warfare. The Armed Forces would be free to continue their gas research and the

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<sup>54</sup>WO33/1128: 6th Annual Report of the CWC, 25 May 1926

Government would appear to be on the side of the angels in declaring that the offensive use of gas in war was wrong, as wrong as it had been in April 1915 when the Germans initiated its use. But as regards ratification, there was no question of Britain trying to provide a lead to the other nations, the CID recommending that Britain should adopt 'a neutral attitude' until other Powers signified their intentions, and ratify only if other Powers did so.<sup>55</sup>

Britain finally ratified the Protocol on 9 April 1930, France, Germany, Italy and the USSR having ratified between 1926 and 1929. Britain added two reservations: the commitments only applied in respect of other States which had ratified the Protocol and would cease if an enemy failed to respect the Protocol. In the USA opposition to the Protocol was so strong that Senator William Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, withdrew it from Senate consideration. The USA did not ratify the Protocol until 1975.<sup>56</sup>

There can be no doubt that chemical warfare was a complex matter which caused serious technical and moral problems. In the political context prevailing after the Great War it is not surprising that these problems proved impossible to resolve. The persistent failure of imagination on the part of British Governments is, however, a depressing feature of the period from 1918 to 1925. Although it was widely believed that chemical weapons would ultimately prove to be enormously destructive, at no stage did decision-makers of the first rank endeavour to initiate a programme of disarmament. Instead, the preferred *modus operandi* of British Ministers was to deplore the existence of chemical weapons while simultaneously declaring that it was impossible to do anything about them. This might be an appropriate attitude for clergymen to strike in the face of sin

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<sup>55</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 22 July 1926 and 11 November 1926

<sup>56</sup>Spiers, E.M. Chemical Warfare (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) pp.46-47

but for the representatives of a major Power it constituted a failure of political leadership.



## Chapter 5 - Naval Disarmament 1918-22

Amongst those most committed to disarmament in the years following the Great War, the League of Nations was the focal point for such negotiations. It is ironic, therefore, that the only agreement which achieved any limitation and control of armaments in the period of this study should have taken place outside the machinery of the League and as a result of an initiative by the USA, which was not a League member. In this sense, and because it was concerned with arms limitation and control amongst a small group of Powers only, the Washington Conference 1921-22 stands on the periphery of this study. At other levels, however, the Conference stands at its centre. First, it sought to deal not just with naval armaments but also with land and air armaments and with chemical weapons, all of which were accorded considerable importance within the League. Second, the Conference directly influenced two League sponsored attempts at disarmament: the initiative to bring about an extension of the principles which were held to underpin the Naval Limitation Treaty signed at Washington and the scheme for land and air disarmament which was advanced within the TMC by Viscount Esher. Both of these schemes receive detailed attention in subsequent chapters. Third, consideration of naval disarmament - in the limited sense of arms reductions - by British decision-makers in the years before the Washington Conference and at the Conference itself expose the considerable range of pressures which were operating on them in the post-war period.

Britain emerged from the Great War and the peace-making process at Paris with considerable advantages as far as its international position was concerned but was also facing problems which were potentially very serious. Germany's naval power had been destroyed and its military strength massively

reduced so that the threat which it had posed prior to 1914 no longer had to be taken into consideration. With the German Fleet interned and then scuttled, the British Navy very nearly equalled all the other fleets in the world combined in terms of tonnage and numbers of fighting ships.<sup>1</sup> Britain was also able to strengthen its Empire, through the mandates system, following the collapse of German power. It could further be argued that the League Covenant was beneficial to Britain in that it did not impose upon it any heavy commitments. Yet the post-war world was also fraught with danger for Britain. Nationalism in Ireland and India and fighting in Egypt, Iraq and Afghanistan threatened the security of its Empire, there were serious economic problems at home which could weaken the country's ability to provide for imperial defence and the naval building programmes of the USA and Japan challenged Britain's naval supremacy. The fact that these naval building programmes threatened the possibility of confrontation between the USA and Japan in the Pacific was an additional problem for British decision-makers: Britain remained in alliance with Japan, had close links with the USA and extensive interests of its own in the Far East. For these reasons it could not regard such developments with detachment.<sup>2</sup>

The Admiralty was especially and inevitably concerned about the growth of US naval power. In early November 1918, before the Armistice had been signed, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Eric Geddes, asserted that 'President Wilson wishes to create a sea power other than ours' and that 'it is the aim and purpose of the President to reduce comparatively the preponderance in sea-power of the British Empire'.<sup>3</sup> At this stage, however, there was also concern

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<sup>1</sup>McDonald, J.K. 'Lloyd George and the search for a postwar naval policy 1919' in Taylor, A.J.P. (ed.), Lloyd George: twelve essays (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1971) p.192

<sup>2</sup>Goldstein, E. 'The Evolution of British Diplomatic Strategy for the Washington Conference' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), op cit., pp.4-5

<sup>3</sup>Adm116/1810: memorandum by Geddes, 7 November 1918

within the Admiralty regarding the impact of Wilson's commitment, as expressed in the fourth of his famous Fourteen Points of 8 January 1918, 'that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety', and the impact of the proposed League Covenant.<sup>4</sup> Memoranda produced in December 1918 for the War Cabinet indicated a number of important points about the Admiralty's attitude to disarmament.<sup>5</sup>

First, it opposed the idea of a disarmament process being initiated through the proposed League of Nations because it believed that the inevitable consequence would be to deprive Britain of its naval independence and 'to place in the hands of some international tribunal the responsibility of determining what naval force is required for the protection of the Empire'.<sup>6</sup> Second, it rejected that which Madariaga has defined as the direct or technical approach to arms reduction, 'a method whereby a direct solution is sought in the examination of the technical means for reducing and limiting armaments at once'.<sup>7</sup> Instead it argued for 'the indirect or political method whereby the solution of the problem is sought in the creation of the political circumstances required for disarmament to take place, so to say, of itself'.<sup>8</sup> The Director of the Plans Division, Captain Cyril Fuller, set this out quite clearly in a note covering his department's memorandum of 2 December 1918:

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<sup>4</sup>Taylor, A.J.P. English History 1914-45 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) p.163

<sup>5</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: 'Limitation of armaments and standards of relative naval strength', 2 December 1918; Adm116/1772: 'Memoranda by the Admiralty on naval aspects of a League of Nations and limitation of armaments', 23 December 1918

<sup>6</sup>Adm116/1772 : 'Memoranda by the Admiralty on naval aspects of a League of Nations and limitation of armaments', 23 December 1918

<sup>7</sup>Madariaga, op.cit., p.97

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp.97-98

What the nations of the world should strive for is not a reduction of armaments by means of some artificial code, but the elimination of competitive building. If this is attained, reduction of armaments will come about of itself.<sup>9</sup>

At this stage, however, the Admiralty was not able to put forward any suggestions as to how such competitive building might be eliminated. A notable feature of this period was the unwillingness of the Admiralty to advocate any schemes by which disarmament might have been achieved. Third, it made it clear that if a reduction in the size of the various fleets could be achieved, this reduction should be proportionate so that Britain's relative superiority could be maintained.<sup>10</sup> It was also essential, it held, that the Navy was sufficiently strong to fulfil its historic role of defending the country's world-wide imperial interests.<sup>11</sup>

In rejecting the direct approach to arms reduction, the Admiralty considered the possible means by which a proportionate limitation upon the strength of all navies might be achieved. It argued that this might be done by value of overseas trade, tonnage of mercantile fleet, pre-war or present strength or by length of coastline. It rejected fixing naval strength on the basis of the tonnage of mercantile marine as this would limit a great Power such as the USA to a relatively small fleet. The problem with basing naval strength on pre-war or present strength was, according to the

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<sup>9</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: note by the Fuller, 5 December 1918 covering a Plans Division memorandum, 'Limitation of armaments and standards of relative naval strength', 2 December 1918

<sup>10</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: 'Limitation of armaments and standards of relative naval strength', 2 December 1918

<sup>11</sup>Adm116/1772: 'Memoranda by the Admiralty on naval aspects of a League of Nations and limitation of armaments', 23 December 1918

Admiralty, that it would perpetuate standards of naval strength after they had become obsolete. This was, however, to be the basis of the Naval Limitation Treaty concluded just two years later at Washington and, as will be seen in the next chapter, it formed the basis of an initiative, sponsored by the Admiralty, to extend the Washington principles to the other naval Powers which possessed capital ships. The Admiralty also argued that it was inappropriate to base naval strength on length of coastline because the principal purpose of navies was to protect trade and to maintain communications. Having rejected these three possible methods, the Admiralty concluded that the best method for fixing naval strength was the value of overseas trade, even though it envisaged that fluctuations in the value of such trade might cause some difficulties.<sup>12</sup>

The Admiralty then turned its attention to the method by which naval armaments might be limited and once again it offered four possibilities: size of naval estimates, number and type of ships, strength of personnel and aggregate tonnage of ships. The first, a form of budgetary limitation, was rejected as being too open to evasion given that there was ample scope for dispute over which items of expenditure should be included in the estimates. The second was also rejected on the ground that it would be difficult to secure international agreement as to the definition of types of ships. In view of the agreement achieved in 1922 at Washington, based on capital ship size and tonnage, it could be concluded that the Admiralty was being either disingenuous or unimaginative in so arguing. The third method was considered inappropriate because there were differing systems of service and these would make it very difficult to

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<sup>12</sup>Tbid.

establish a basis for assessing personnel strength. The Admiralty was not prepared to accept aggregate tonnage of ships as a basis for determining naval size, on the ground that it would work to the disadvantage of a nation such as Britain which required 'ships of good sea-keeping qualities and great fuel capacity' but would not hinder a nation which wanted ships only for aggressive purposes.<sup>13</sup> The Admiralty memorandum concluded, therefore, that 'any attempt to set up arbitrary and artificial standards of relative strength or to limit the natural expression of a nation's instinctive and reasonable determination to judge how best to protect its own interests is foredoomed to failure'.<sup>14</sup> As Roskill has suggested, it is impossible not to conclude that the Admiralty's arguments were constructed so as to reach just such a result and to demonstrate that Britain's naval needs were greater than those of any other Power.<sup>15</sup> Such a conclusion is reinforced by the fact that at much the same time the US Navy Department argued that its needs were greater than those of any other Power on the ground that the sea lanes which required its protection were immensely long, circling both American continents, except for the Arctic, and extending as far west as the Philippines. The US Navy Department's map showing the sea lanes requiring the protection of the British Navy was remarkable in that it circled the east coast of Africa only.<sup>16</sup> Independently of each other the Naval Staffs of the world's two greatest sea Powers were deliberately constructing arguments to demonstrate the over-riding requirements of their own Fleets.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Roskill, S. Naval Policy Between the Wars. I: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929 (London: Collins, 1968), p.83

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

Allied negotiations over the pre-Armistice agreement in Paris in late October and early November 1918 and the subsequent peace negotiations in Paris revealed that the British Government was, at that time, in agreement with its Naval Staff regarding the maintenance of Britain's sea supremacy. This was made very clear by Lloyd George's declaration that 'Great Britain would spend her last guinea to keep a navy superior to that of the United States or any other power'.<sup>17</sup> The problem with such an approach was that by early 1919 it was clear that the USA, already second in terms of naval strength to Britain, intended to build a Fleet which would, at least, equal Britain's Navy. On 2 December 1918 Wilson, in his message to Congress before sailing for Paris, had sought approval for a three year building programme which would provide sixteen capital ships. These ships would be in addition to the nineteen capital ships of the 1916 building programme: work on these had been delayed by the Great War but, once the Armistice had been concluded, the US Government prepared to continue with it. Although Wilson withdrew support for the 1918 programme in May 1919 because it was not expected that the newly elected Republican Congress would support it, the 1916 programme remained and this caused considerable unease within the British Government.<sup>18</sup> Although the British Navy was clearly superior to the US Navy in terms of ships in service, it was facing a serious challenge as regards vessels currently under construction or authorized.<sup>19</sup>

Historians of British naval arms limitation policy in the period following the Great War have identified a number of pressures operating

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<sup>17</sup>McDonald, *op.cit.*, p.191

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p.193

<sup>19</sup>Hall, C. *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921-37* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p.13

on the Lloyd George Administration. Financial stringency was clearly of very considerable importance and the Prime Minister wanted the US Government to reduce its naval expenditure so that Britain could do the same. On 25 March 1919 the First Lord of the Admiralty, Walter Long, complained to the Admiralty Board that their proposed estimates were too high given the financial constraints operating on the Government. At the same time Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War and Air, was under similar pressure from Bonar Law to reduce the spending of his Departments.<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on the importance of financial pressures received support from McKercher who argued that Britain was overstretched in an unstable world facing the threat of Bolshevism and the French desire for revenge against Germany, in addition to the challenge of US naval ambitions.<sup>21</sup> McKercher stated that British naval arms limitation policy in the 1920s was almost exclusively shaped by domestic politics and that there was direct public pressure to spend less on arms on the grounds that there should be no more war. In this respect he attached much importance to the role of the Union of Democratic Control and the League of Nations Union. Such direct public pressure was reinforced by more indirect pressure to reduce arms spending so that the Government would be able to spend money on domestic social programmes.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, difficult to accept McKercher's assessment of the impact of pacifist and pacifist pressure groups<sup>23</sup> in the period 1918-25 as the official records

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<sup>20</sup>McDonald, *op.cit.*, p.193-94

<sup>21</sup>McKercher, B.J.C. 'The Politics of Naval Arms Limitation in Britain in the 1920s' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds ), *op.cit.*, pp.35-59

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>See Ceadel, M. *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) for a discussion of the distinction between pacifism and pacificism



show little evidence of decision-makers' susceptibilities to such opinion. By contrast with McKercher's emphasis on domestic political considerations, Fry stresses the importance of the relationship between financial and political problems on the one hand and the significance of imperial considerations on the other.<sup>24</sup> He considers that Britain's commitment to imperial security was of central significance and was never in question.

Lloyd George's statement in late 1918 that Britain would do all that it possibly could to maintain its naval supremacy accords with Fry's assessment and suggests that the Prime Minister was prepared to pursue a policy based on competition rather than agreement. The opening stages of the peace negotiations at Paris confirmed this and have been referred to by Roskill as 'the naval battle of Paris'.<sup>25</sup> This revolved around the British determination not to lose its dominant naval position and its even stronger hostility to the US Government's definition of freedom of the seas. By early April, however, this competition gave way to compromise. On 10 April, Cecil and House reached an agreement by which the USA agreed to suspend its 1919 three year building programme and to consider postponing construction of ships of the 1916 programme which had been authorized but not laid down. In return Britain agreed to support the establishment of the League of Nations and to accept a clause in the Covenant affirming the validity of the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>26</sup> More significantly, however, the two nations concurred that there should be an agreement as to the relative strengths of their Navies, a decision which

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<sup>24</sup>Fry, M.G.F. 'The Pacific Dominions and the Washington Conference, 1921-22' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.60-101

<sup>25</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.60

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p.91

represented 'the first tentative commitment by the two major naval powers to the idea of determining naval relationships by agreement rather than by competition'.<sup>27</sup> The problematical issue of how such agreement was to be achieved was not, however, considered.

As the British and US Governments moved towards cooperation in naval matters, the Admiralty began to consider the implications of membership of the League. Memoranda written in February 1919 identified the circumstances in which war might break out under the League Covenant and stressed the importance of immediate action by naval forces should hostilities occur.<sup>28</sup> It was argued that without such action it would be impossible 'to ensure the control of the sea communications essential to the co-operation of the League'.<sup>29</sup> The difficulty envisaged was that this rapid naval action would have to be taken, in the event of a sudden outbreak of war, before a Supreme War Council could be formed. The Naval Staff considered, therefore, that some form of special arrangement should be put in place so that the League members would be able to take such rapid action. What is striking is that the memorandum suggested that the naval security of the League should be entrusted to the British Navy. In support of this it was argued that in most cases which could be envisaged, this would occur automatically given the power of Britain's Navy and its widespread imperial interests. It was also recognized that such a development could work very much in Britain's interests:

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<sup>27</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.17

<sup>28</sup>Adm1/8558/129: 'Military Aspects of the League of Nations', 25 February 1919 and 'Naval Considerations', 25 February 1919

<sup>29</sup>Adm1/8558/129: 'Naval Considerations', 25 February 1919

It need hardly be said that so far as the British Empire itself is concerned no better arrangement could be conceived. Its present responsibility for its own security would, it is true, be somewhat increased, but not necessarily in so far as battleship strength, the principal cause of the cost of naval armaments, was concerned; this cost would actually be reduced if other nations could be induced to take a moderate view of their own naval requirements on the understanding that in case of a League war their interests, other than purely local defence, would be undertaken by Great Britain.<sup>30</sup>

These proposals went no further than the Chiefs of the Military and Air Sections and it was hardly conceivable that they would have won support from the US Government which might well have seen them as an attempt to maintain British naval supremacy under the guise of support for the League. Nevertheless, the tone of the memorandum is not hostile to the League and represents an apparently serious attempt to consider how Britain should respond to its establishment.

The Plans Division, which in June 1919 remained under the direction of Captain Fuller, went a stage further in terms of support for arms limitation initiatives through the League and put forward a proposal which aimed at disarmament, as understood in this thesis, even though it was also intended to maintain Britain's naval supremacy. This proposal also represented a move away from the Plans Division's previous support for the indirect approach to disarmament and towards support for the direct method. The Plans Division expected that the question of reduction of naval armaments would 'assume great

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

prominence in the near future' and held that, 'as an honest member of the League, we must show a real desire to limit expenditure on naval armaments, and must endeavour to produce a scheme, to which the agreement of the other members of the League will be possible'.<sup>31</sup> It proposed that Britain should state that it would immediately stop the construction of all warships over 8,000 tons and reduce its Navy by 1935 to a specified number of ships of not more than 8,000 tons. Such action by Britain would, however, be dependent on other nations agreeing to limit their ships to this maximum tonnage and to scrapping larger warships by 1935.<sup>32</sup> The Plans Division proposed limiting the size of individual ships to 8,000 tons as this was the smallest size of ship which could meet both the peace-time requirements of the British Navy and the demands of the League, should a war occur. It explicitly stated that the British Navy could not be limited to any specific number of warships relative to other Powers, as such a limitation might prevent it from fulfilling its duties of imperial defence and it recognized, therefore, that it could not ask other Powers to limit the number of their vessels. The British Navy could, however, declare that it required a specific number of ships not exceeding 8,000 tons and that it would not exceed this number as long as other Powers kept the number of their warships within reasonable limits. The British Navy would reserve the right to increase the size of its Navy if it considered that its supremacy was under challenge.<sup>33</sup>

The Plans Division proposal was far-sighted in that it argued, in effect, that capital ships were redundant because in the Great War the main battle fleets had neutralized each other. Heavy expenditure on this class of ship was, therefore, unnecessary. Britain's principal requirement was for cruisers and the

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<sup>31</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: Plans Division memorandum, 'League of Nations. Reduction in Naval Armaments', 24 June 1919

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

memorandum proposed that Britain needed eighty eight ships of this type in order to meet its peace-time requirements. The scheme was also clearly intended to throw the US Government onto the defensive concerning its own capital ship building programme. If, as the Plans Division anticipated, the USA did oppose the proposal, it could be answered by showing that 'the attitude they adopt is the very one which surrounded Germany with an atmosphere of suspicion, since they can show no just cause for an enormous navy at present, with their comparatively small trade and colonial possessions, and their independence of oversea trade for their means of existence'.<sup>34</sup> The Plans Division took the view, however, that its proposal depended on all nations joining the League because it could not operate if there was a nation outside the League free to build a large battle fleet. It was also determined that Britain's naval security should be maintained by ensuring that the country had the capacity to increase its power by rapid shipbuilding:

In fact, the weaker the navies in existence, in peace-time under the League, the quicker could we hope to increase our advantage in war-time by new and more powerful construction, though we must be careful to see that in the soothing atmosphere of the League of Nations the right hand of our ship designers does not lose its cunning.<sup>35</sup>

This concern with maintaining Britain's shipbuilding capability was a very important element in Admiralty thinking throughout this period and beyond.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

This Plans Division disarmament initiative was not well received by the Naval Staff. Commodore Sinclair, Director of Naval Intelligence, asserted that the USA would not accept a scheme which confirmed Britain's naval supremacy and that the Japanese would also reject it as it focused competition on the type of ship where they were weakest.<sup>36</sup> Captain Aylmer, Assistant Director of the Operations Division, also took the view that the USA would oppose the proposal because it believed that it would at some stage have to fight the Japanese and it had to be ready, therefore, to fight in the Pacific without leaving its Atlantic coast unprotected.<sup>37</sup> Rear Admiral Fergusson, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, adopted a decidedly sceptical view of the League and asserted that 'The old position of these Islands as regards Maritime defence is not really changed by 6 months conversation in Paris - worthy as the intention may be'.<sup>38</sup> Both Aylmer and Fergusson considered that the best policy as far as reduction of arms was concerned was to do nothing very much and wait to see how matters developed:

It is believed that this matter will settle itself if left to itself. No country can afford to spend vast sums on unproductive material at the present time, nor for many years to come.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the unenthusiastic response to the paper, it was resubmitted in a slightly modified form by Fuller in late September 1919. This was because the first meeting of the League would occur in November and at that meeting the

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<sup>36</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: minute by Sinclair, 9 July 1919

<sup>37</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: minute by Aylmer, 11 July 1919

<sup>38</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: minute by Fergusson, 17 July 1919

<sup>39</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: minute by Aylmer, 11 July 1919

British naval representative would have to know whether he was to support the existing policy and also be provided with arguments against the proposals of other Powers which could not be expected to coincide with British naval interests. The existing policy was set out in the paper entitled 'Admiralty Policy in relation to the Peace Settlement', and held that 'any attempt to set up arbitrary and artificial standards of relative strength or to limit the natural expression of a nation's instinctive and reasonable determination to judge how best to protect its own interests is foredoomed to failure'.<sup>40</sup> The Plans Division did not like this policy because 'This non possumus attitude towards this question does not give a basis from which to meet the arguments of Foreign Powers, nor does it discuss possible means of retaining our supremacy with the least expenditure'.<sup>41</sup> It was for this reason that the Plans Division re-submitted the paper which it had proposed in June, despite the unfavourable response which it had then received. The paper made no more progress in its second incarnation than it had in its first.

As the Plans Division put forward its scheme for limiting naval arms, a different and more limited approach to the problem was initiated by the British Government. On 16 July 1919 the Cabinet Secretary, Hankey, went with Lloyd George to Criccieth for a conference on economic policy and, during the course of this meeting, he wrote a paper entitled 'Towards a National Policy. July 1919'. In the section which dealt with foreign and defence policy, Hankey argued that US financial, economic, maritime and military power was such that Britain could not successfully wage war against it. Hankey, however, considered such a war to be extremely improbable and argued, therefore, that there was no need for Britain to base either its military or naval spending on such a war. In support of

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<sup>40</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: memorandum by Domville, 24 September 1919

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

this view he pointed out that before the Great War, Britain's military and defence spending had been determined without reference to the USA. He did, nevertheless, argue that Britain should maintain naval equality with the USA so that the country could not be pressurized by an anti-British President. This was a very similar point to the one which Long had made earlier in the month when arguing in favour of the Admiralty's estimate of over £170m for 1919-20. The First Lord of the Admiralty took the view that there were important diplomatic, deterrent and prestige benefits to be gained from Britain having the world's largest Fleet. Instead of taking account of the US Navy, Hankey suggested that Britain might base its naval construction programme on a two-Power standard, excluding the USA. This would have meant Britain maintaining a Fleet equal to those of France and Japan. As McDonald has pointed out, this would not have been likely to improve relations with either Japan or France and it would not have benefited Anglo-US relations if the outcome were a British Fleet which equalled or exceeded that of the US. Hankey's thoughts were not focused solely on the relationship between British expenditure on the Navy and Anglo-US naval competition. He recognized that there would have to be not only a naval reduction agreement between Britain and the USA but also international naval disarmament.<sup>42</sup>

At this stage the British Government made no moves to initiate naval disarmament but, by the end of July 1919, it had decided that it should seek special negotiations with the US Government in order to resolve three key problems: Ireland, naval construction and the League. The Government hoped that Viscount Grey of Fallodon, the former Foreign Secretary, would be prepared to accept an invitation to be Ambassador to the USA in succession to

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<sup>42</sup>McDonald, *op.cit.*, p.200



Lord Reading. In a meeting with Haldane, the former Liberal Lord Chancellor, and Colonel House, Woodrow Wilson's special emissary, Grey made it clear that, although he was not prepared to become Ambassador, he would undertake a special mission to Washington if the British Government agreed with him as to how these problems were to be tackled. As far as the naval question was concerned, Grey took a position which was very similar to Hankey's in that he held that Britain should make it clear to Wilson's administration that it would not engage in naval construction against the USA but that it would build against any European Power which threatened its security. There were, however, clear difficulties with the approach advocated by Grey and Hankey:

The problem with both was that while the United States and Great Britain could each piously pronounce that her naval standard did not include the other, the two fleets were bound to be compared and to appear as rivals. Grey's scheme required that each nation decide that it was a matter of no moment if the other possessed a larger navy.

There was no reason to expect either nation to adopt this attitude.<sup>43</sup>

It would also be possible for Britain to engage in competition with the USA under the pretext of using the other two Powers as the basis for comparison.

Following his meeting with Grey and Haldane, House wrote to Wilson, expressing the view that the British Government would be less keen to send Grey to Washington once it had read his memorandum on naval policy. In this, however, House was wrong for Lloyd George was very keen for Grey to go, even when he knew his views on naval policy, and Grey was willing to go as

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p.203

long as he had instructions which satisfied his understanding of what was required. Grey wanted the Government to issue a public statement declaring that Britain would take no account of US naval estimates when framing its own estimates. Grey was confident that the result of such a policy would be to bring an end to US plans to build a large Navy. He took the view that if Britain failed to adopt this policy the outcome would be naval competition with the USA which Britain would certainly lose. Grey did, however, accept Lloyd George's view that this policy would have to be met with a reciprocal policy by the USA. Accordingly, on 13 August, Bonar Law, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Commons, announced in the House that Grey would go on a special mission to Washington, pending the appointment of a permanent Ambassador early in 1920.<sup>44</sup>

The financial pressures confronting the Government at this time and the Admiralty's determination to resist cuts in naval spending were evident in the Cabinet meeting of 5 August 1919. It was at this meeting that Lloyd George declared that he wanted the Government to be able to determine defence policy over a given period of time and he suggested that five or ten years might be an appropriate period. The Cabinet decided, therefore, that the Admiralty, India Office and War Office should provide information concerning defence over these two periods for consideration by the Cabinet. The Admiralty was also asked to provide information on the existing and likely future strength of the US Navy.<sup>45</sup>

On 8 August the Admiralty sent Lloyd George information regarding the size of the US Fleet and four days later it produced a memorandum dealing with post-war naval policy. In this memorandum, which was framed around four questions, Long revealed a good deal about the nature of Admiralty thinking in

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.204-206

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p.207

the post-war period. First, although it did not consider that the USA intended to become an aggressive Power, it was concerned that a combination of cuts affecting Britain's capital ship Fleet and completion of the USA's 1916 capital ship construction programme of 1916 would place Britain 'in a position of manifest inferiority'.<sup>46</sup> At this time no one in the British Government could have doubted the Admiralty's determination to do all that it could to ensure that Britain remained the world's principal naval Power. Yet the Admiralty also wanted the Government to decide its attitude to arms reduction and the League. Long's comments on the possible inter-relationship of these two issues were important for they indicated possible Admiralty support for disarmament and suggested that the Plans Division proposals of June 1919 had not fallen on entirely deaf ears:

Unless we are to throw away the principle of mutual reduction of armaments, I suggest that we should not take any serious action independently of the procedure under the Covenant, but that whatever decision be arrived at, the procedure should be to propose to all the Allied Powers a reduction under the provisions of Article 8 of the Covenant. It might be advisable to sound the U.S.A. beforehand as to whether they will take joint initial action with us in putting forward such proposals through the Council of the League. We shall then know whether the object of the U.S.A. in projecting this big Fleet (as some people think) [is] merely to have a powerful weapon with which to obtain a general reduction of Armaments, or

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<sup>46</sup>Adm116/1774: memorandum by Long, 'Post-War Naval Policy', 12 August 1919

whether it is really their intention to force us to the alternative of either competing with or accepting numerical inferiority to them.<sup>47</sup>

Long took the view that the extent to which the League was successful would also influence the decision as to whether the country's defence policy was to be decided over five or ten years. His concern was that the Admiralty only had information regarding the naval construction plans of the USA and Japan extending over a five year period so that, in the situation which pertained in 1919, it was impossible to say what the strength of these two Powers would be in 1929. Long recognized, however, that it would be possible to make more effective reductions over a period of ten years. This was an additional reason, in Long's opinion, for attaching importance to the work of the League as early progress there in the field of international arms reduction might enable the Government to determine its defence spending plans over the longer of the two periods suggested by Lloyd George. Despite this willingness to consider disarmament initiatives through the League, Long also made clear in his memorandum that the Admiralty favoured a resumption of maintaining a naval presence in foreign waters for prestige purposes. This does not, nevertheless, detract from the tone of the memorandum which was generally positive in its attitude to arms reduction, as long as there was movement in the same direction by the USA.<sup>48</sup>

Prior to the Cabinet receiving this Admiralty memorandum, a meeting of the Cabinet Finance Committee had already drawn up the essential features of a new naval policy. Attending this meeting were Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain and Hankey, together with his deputy, Thomas Jones. It

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

was suggested that the Navy should stop all new construction and maintain a Fleet which was no larger than the pre-war standard but it was recognized that this would be difficult to maintain if the USA kept in commission a larger Fleet than that possessed by Britain. In order to deal with such a problem it was suggested, therefore, that Britain should seek a naval arms reduction agreement with the USA.. As McDonald has pointed out, this was in keeping with the promises which had already been made to Grey.<sup>49</sup> The Finance Committee also proposed that the naval estimates for 1920-21 should be £60m and that the estimates should be based on the assumption that there would be no great war within the next ten years and that the principal responsibility of the defence forces was to keep order in Britain and all other non-self-governing British territories.<sup>50</sup>

When the Cabinet met on 15 August it considered no business other than the estimates for the Fighting Services and Long's memorandum of three days previous was not considered. The Cabinet minutes do, of course, record the decisions which were taken but they provide no indication of the discussions which took place. As far as the Navy was concerned, these decisions were significant but they were not as restrictive as they might have been had the Cabinet confirmed all of the suggestions made at the Finance Committee meeting of 11 August. The famous Ten Year Rule was laid down, the Admiralty was instructed to undertake no new construction and it was instructed to frame new estimates not exceeding £60m.<sup>51</sup> It was not, however, required to operate on the basis that its principal responsibility was to keep order in the United Kingdom and those parts of the Empire which were not self-governing. If this

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<sup>49</sup>McDonald, *op.cit.*, p.210

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p.211

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.212-13

restriction had been imposed 'it would have left Long with very little except for his flag-showing light cruisers'.<sup>52</sup>

The Cabinet followed up its establishment of the 15 August principles by agreeing, five days later, the terms of a formal letter of instruction to be given to Grey regarding his mission to Washington. This stated that the naval estimates for 1920-21 would not take account of the USA as a potential enemy and that, although a precise figure for the naval estimates for that year could not yet be provided, it was envisaged that the number of capital ships in full commission would be below the pre-war figure and that no new naval construction would be undertaken. It was also stated that the new estimates would be explained in full to the House of Commons in the autumn and that reciprocity was anticipated from the US Government.<sup>53</sup> It was clear, therefore, that when Grey left for Washington in September 1919, British naval policy was to be based on the agreement which he had reached with Lloyd George earlier in the year. It is for this reason that McDonald took a very different view of the genesis of the Ten Year Rule from Roskill. Roskill argued that Beatty had a very strong influence on Long's memorandum of 12 August which itself powerfully affected Government policy:

It seems certain that it was Long's memorandum of 12th August 1919 which caused the government to issue the notorious 'Ten Year Rule', since three days later the Cabinet directed that the service departments should revise their estimates for the 1920-21 financial

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p.211

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp.214-215

year 'on the assumption that the British Empire would not be engaged in any great war during the next ten years'.<sup>54</sup>

The Admiralty's reaction to the Ten Year Rule and to the imposition of the £60m maximum for the 1920-21 estimates was to warn the Cabinet in late October that Government policy meant that Britain would have to share worldwide naval supremacy with the USA and that, if the USA completed its 1916 building programme and Britain undertook no new construction, the USA would be the world's leading naval Power by 1923. Accordingly, the Admiralty Board recommended that Britain should either seek agreement with the USA on the basis of naval parity or embark on a new construction programme.<sup>55</sup> In Roskill's view it was this assessment of Britain's naval position which was the crucial factor in the Government's decision to ask Grey to undertake the special mission to Washington.<sup>56</sup> McDonald, by contrast, has shown that the principal ideas associated with the Cabinet decisions of 15 August emerged from the Finance Committee meeting which took place four days earlier and before Long's memorandum of 12 August. The relationship between the 15 August principles and the Grey mission was the reverse, therefore, of that suggested by Roskill:

...it seems clear that Lord Grey's special mission to the United States in the autumn of 1919 was not a result, as often assumed, but rather an important and immediate cause of the government's new naval policy adopted in mid-August 1919.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.215

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p.216

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p.216

<sup>57</sup>MacDonald, *op.cit.*, p.213

Grey arrived in Washington on 27 September 1919 but his mission had already been rendered abortive by the thrombosis which had struck Wilson on the previous day and on 5 October, Grey wrote to Lloyd George explaining that this was the situation. In late November, however, the British Government began to receive reports which indicated that the USA was beginning to reduce its Navy. As a result, Lloyd George, with Long's approval, sent a telegram to Grey on 25 November asking him to provide as much information as possible about US naval policy. The Prime Minister explained that this was required to enable the Government to produce the naval estimates for 1920-21. Grey responded on 26 November that his enquiries indicated that the USA was reducing its Fleet. Its existing strength in officers and men was 107,400 rather than its proposed establishment of 150,000 and this personnel shortage meant that most US ships had reduced crews. In the light of this Grey advised Lloyd George to hold down the naval estimates as an example to the USA. Grey feared that, if Britain tried to arrive at a naval agreement with the USA, it would have the opposite effect and provoke renewed pressure for a large Fleet. McDonald considered that Grey's approach was correct for the uncertain political situation in the USA, where a Democratic Administration, deprived of Presidential leadership, was in conflict with a Republican Congress, which meant that any Anglo-US naval agreement was impossible.<sup>58</sup>

There were, however, clear grounds for criticizing such an approach to the USA. The Foreign Secretary, Curzon, was evidently dissatisfied with Grey's advice for it represented a change from the policy which had been agreed before the latter's departure for Washington:

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp.219-221



It was a part of Lord Grey's instructions that if we reduced, the Americans should be asked & should promise to do the same. He took our pledge and now we are asked to forego theirs.<sup>59</sup>

There was also the danger that such a policy would expose the British Government to the criticism that it was surrendering naval supremacy to the USA. The Admiralty had already thrown down a challenge to the Government in its memorandum of 23 October by stating that the decision to authorize no further construction inevitably meant US superiority in the very near future and urging that this be explained both to Parliament and to the Empire. The Admiralty clearly wanted the Government to shy away from this challenge and in this respect it emerged victorious for Lloyd George never provided Parliament with a full explanation of the new naval policy.<sup>60</sup> McDonald has argued that, in the face of his failure to balance cuts in the British naval estimates with corresponding reductions in the USA's naval plans, Lloyd George sought to pursue a policy which involved neither significant cuts in naval expenditure and a recognition that the US Fleet would soon establish supremacy nor a commitment to heavy expenditure to ensure that Britain remained the world's foremost naval Power. As a result:

He therefore attempted, for almost two years, to support both these contradictory policies simultaneously, or alternatively. Thus the reassessment of British naval policy in the second half of 1919 produced not one new policy, but two competing and largely

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<sup>59</sup>Quoted in *ibid.*, p.221

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p.216

incompatible policies. The result was, on the one hand, a gradual and reluctant adoption - or admission - of a naval one power standard for capital ship equality with the United States; and, on the other hand, a general continuation of the restrictions on naval planning and expenditure - such as the ten year rule - imposed on the admiralty at the 15 August cabinet meeting.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, as Ferris has shown, the move towards a one-Power naval standard represented a victory for the Admiralty over the apparent constraints of the principles governing the Navy laid down in August 1919.<sup>62</sup> In a memorandum of 13 February 1920, Long asked the Cabinet to authorize estimates of £84m for 1920-21.<sup>63</sup> These were justified, he asserted on the grounds of maintaining the Fleet at the minimum strength required for imperial security, the liquidation of the terminal expenses of the Great War and the abnormal expenditure arising out of the temporary obligations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea. Long held that it would not be possible for the Government to present the estimates without a clear statement of naval policy and he reminded the Cabinet of the Admiralty's views as set out in the memorandum of 24 October. Long was concerned that estimates introduced in the USA since then suggested a further increase of two battleships and one battle cruiser over the 1916 programme. In this situation Long held that Britain had either to negotiate a naval arms limitation agreement with the USA based on equality, when such an opportunity presented itself, or to begin a construction programme of its own. Any other course of action would, he considered, see Britain fall into second place as a

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<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, p.221

<sup>62</sup>Ferris, *op cit.*, pp.60-63

<sup>63</sup>Adm116/1774 : memorandum, 'Navy Estimates and Naval Policy', 13 February 1920

naval Power. Long wanted a naval *entente* with the USA which would make it possible for the two Powers to move in 'the direction of reducing that ample margin of naval strength which we alike possess over all other navies'.<sup>64</sup> If this could not be achieved, however, then Britain would have to act in order to maintain its naval supremacy and that meant stating that 'a one-power standard against the strongest naval power is the minimum standard compatible with our vast sea requirements' and basing the country's construction programme on this.<sup>65</sup> Despite the fact that he was contemplating the possibility of a naval arms race between Britain and the USA, Long held that the expenditure which the Admiralty was proposing constituted the moderate naval estimates for which Grey had called.

In March 1920 Long gained Cabinet approval for the naval estimates and he submitted them to Parliament, reaffirming the principle of the one-Power standard and emphasising that no money was being sought for new construction.<sup>66</sup> This statement was not formally authorized by the Cabinet but Ferris has suggested that it had the Prime Minister's approval because Lloyd George probably regarded Long's declaration as a clear but not a provocative warning to America which did not commit Britain to specific actions'. Although this might be regarded as a shrewd ploy by Lloyd George, it seriously undermined the policy which the Cabinet had approved in the previous year:

In fact, Long had reversed the August 1919 decision about naval policy. The Cabinet could not easily abandon the one power

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.218-219

standard and the Admiralty could defend virtually any proposals by using this vague concept.<sup>67</sup>

In the same month as Parliament approved the one-Power standard and, in so doing, appeared to clarify British naval policy, the US Senate refused to pass the Versailles Treaty by a two-thirds majority and thereby removed the possibility of any Anglo-American initiative to achieve naval disarmament through the League. The combination of Wilson's incapacity and the Senate's decision to detach itself from the great international initiative to which he attached such importance meant that there was little prospect of naval arms limitation in the early 1920s.

By late 1920 the Admiralty was pressing the view that Britain needed a programme of naval construction if it were to maintain the one-Power standard which Long had publicly declared on 17 March. In a memorandum for the Cabinet, the First Lord argued in November 1920 that the USA had neither curtailed their 1916 construction programme nor revealed any desire to seek a naval arms limitation agreement with Britain.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the point had been reached where Britain either had to lay down new ships or recognize that within three years its Navy would be inferior to that of the USA. Long reiterated that the Admiralty's concern was not that Britain would be at a disadvantage in the event of a war with the USA - he did not consider such a conflict possible - but that the country's prestige demanded that equality be maintained. In order to reinforce this argument Long asserted that it was the very impossibility of war with the USA which was 'the sole justification for admitting "approximate

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<sup>67</sup>Ferris, *op.cit.*, pp.62

<sup>68</sup>Adm116/1775 and Cab24/115: CP2176, memorandum by Long, 22 November 1920

equality" between us [Britain and the USA] as consistent with the security of the Empire': the implication was that had it been any other Power, such as Japan, the Admiralty would have been seeking more than 'approximate equality'.<sup>69</sup> The one-Power standard would be maintained, the Admiralty argued, if the Government authorized the beginning of a building programme which would involve laying down four replacement capital ships in 1921-22 and a further four in 1922-23. The full programme would extend over five financial years, involve expenditure totalling £83.8m and ensure equality by 1925, as long as there was no further construction by the USA or Japan.<sup>70</sup>

The Government was now confronting the serious problem which the failure of Grey's mission had created. It had no desire for a naval arms race but, in the absence of Presidential leadership in the USA, it was difficult to see how this could be avoided. The situation was exacerbated by US opposition to Japanese aims in the Western Pacific and on the Asiatic mainland. It was hardly surprising, then, that the Cabinet had no desire to antagonize the Washington Administration by acceding to the Admiralty's demands. Instead it asked the CID to consider the question of British naval strength, a move which resulted in the establishment of the Naval Shipbuilding Sub-Committee of the CID under the chairmanship of Bonar Law.<sup>71</sup> The Admiralty, however, continued to pressurize the Government. In mid-December, Beatty expressed his strong concern at the reduced shipbuilding capacity in Britain and asserted that, if naval construction were delayed until 1923-24, it could not be guaranteed that there would be sufficient facilities for four ships to be laid down in one year. This was because the special plant, machinery and skilled labour required for capital ship building

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.221

were not being maintained.<sup>72</sup> At the end of January 1921, Beatty received strong support from Long in memoranda to the CID and to the Cabinet.<sup>73</sup> The First Lord's attitude echoed the intransigence which Lloyd George had shown in the first months after the Armistice:

I hope that this question may definitely be decided without any further delay, as it is of the utmost importance that our policy should be known; that those who provide the necessary material should at once get to work; and that the world should know that, whatever our economies may have to be, we are determined not to surrender the position at sea which we have held for so long, and from which the world, quite as much as ourselves, has derived such immense benefit.<sup>74</sup>

The views of Long and Beatty indicate that the political and Service chiefs of the Navy were determined to do all they could to use the one-Power standard as a weapon against the Cabinet's reluctance to allocate funds to naval construction. There were no signs that either of these men was prepared to put forward initiatives which might have made possible the achievement of naval arms limitation. Yet, in a paper written in August 1920, when the international context was no more favourable than it was in the period from November 1920 to January 1921, the Plans Division once again revealed a willingness to move

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<sup>72</sup>Adm116/1775: memorandum by Beatty, 'Naval Construction', 14 December 1920

<sup>73</sup>Adm116/1775: memorandum by Long, 28 January 1921; Cab24/119: CP2518, 31 January 1921.

<sup>74</sup>Adm116/1775: memorandum by Long to the CID, 28 January 1921

towards a disarmament policy.<sup>75</sup> The Director of the Plans Division was now Captain Barry Domville who had been appointed in May 1920, having been Fuller's deputy since August 1919. The Plans Division held that, as a member of the League, the three principal questions affecting British naval policy were arms limitation, the private manufacture of arms and the interchange of information amongst League members regarding arms. Of these it considered arms limitation to be the most important but it recognized the difficulties facing the British Government. The USA was not then a member of the League and it would not be clear whether it was to become a member until after the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1920. The position of the USA was, of course, crucial as it was the only Power with sufficient wealth to build a Fleet which could rival and surpass that of Britain in the near future. Until the attitude of the USA to Article VIII of the Covenant of the League was defined clearly, therefore, 'Great Britain must take the greatest care not to bind herself in any way whatever by any sort of agreement which can hamper her naval development'. The Plans Division held, however, that Britain was the principal Power to have signed the Covenant and, therefore, 'she must shew [sic] her faith in the League by being prepared with some policy in connection with its naval clauses'.<sup>76</sup> The policy which was advanced was clearly intended to preserve Britain's relative naval supremacy but, had it or any similar policy been adopted, it would have marked the adoption of a more positive approach to the issue of naval disarmament.

The purpose of the paper was to work out a ratio of the naval needs of the five principal naval Powers - Britain, the USA, France, Italy and Japan - and

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<sup>75</sup>Adm1/8592/131A: memorandum by the Plans Division, 'Admiralty Policy and the League of Nations', 11 August 1920

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

to adopt this as the scale of naval strength which none of the Powers should exceed. The paper offered seven criteria by which the all-important ratio was to be determined. These were the length of coastline, the transportation of man-power to the mother-country, the man-power for an expeditionary force, the extent of overseas trade, the size of the mercantile marine, national wealth insurance and national prestige. The Power which had the highest score for each of these was allocated 10 points and then the other Powers were given a figure as a ratio of 10. Once this had been done it was possible to add up each Power's total ration. The Power with the highest total was then given 10 and the total of the other Powers was worked out as a ratio of 10. The result of the Plans Division's calculations was that 10 was given to Britain, 6.1 to the USA, 2.7 to France, 1.4 to Italy and 2.04 to Japan.<sup>77</sup>

Having established a ratio of the naval requirements of the various States, the paper then sought to determine a standard by which the naval strength of a Power could be measured. It offered the same four possibilities which had been identified in the Admiralty's paper of 23 December 1918, namely, the size of the naval estimates, the number and type of ships, the strength of personnel and the aggregate tonnage of the navy. It differed from the 1918 paper, however, in that, while it rejected the first three, it held that the aggregate tonnage of the navy might be employed without damaging Britain's interests. The advantage of measuring naval strength by aggregate tonnage was that it was difficult to disguise the approximate tonnage of ships. It was still possible, however, that this might be an unsatisfactory standard to employ because, once an aggregate tonnage limit had been established, 'we might find ourselves forced by one nation's building programme into the construction of

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.



capital ships which would take up nearly our allowance of tonnage, while we urgently needed cruisers to protect our trade routes from another power building cruisers'.<sup>78</sup> The Plans Division held, however, that it would be possible to overcome this problem by limiting the size of individual ships. This meant, of course, that the maximum size of a warship would have to be determined. It was argued that warships would have to be sufficiently large and fast to deal with modern liners and this criterion indicated that a large cruiser was required: a cruiser displacing no less than 10,000 tons was thought necessary. Once this size had been decided upon, the aggregate tonnage standard had to be determined. The Plans Division decided that Britain needed 100 cruisers because this was the number which it had on trade duties in December 1914 when German cruisers were threatening the country's trade routes. On the assumption, therefore, that 10,000 ton ships were the standard, Britain required a total naval tonnage of 1m tons. When this was applied to the ratio previously decided, it meant that the USA would be allowed 610,000 tons, France 270,000 tons, Italy 140,000 tons and Japan 204,000 tons.<sup>79</sup>

Although the Admiralty papers contain no Staff criticisms of these detailed and rather complex proposals, it is difficult to imagine that they would have been received any more favourably than those put forward by the Plans Division in June 1919. The CID Naval Shipbuilding Sub-Committee, under Law's chairmanship, did indicate division amongst naval specialists regarding the future value of the capital ship. In their evidence to the Sub-Committee, Rear-Admirals Charles de Bartolomé, a former 3rd Sea Lord, Sidney Stewart Hall, Commodore of the Submarine Service from 1915 to 1918 and Herbert William Richmond, President of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, 'expressed

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

serious doubts regarding the continued dominance of that type of ship'.<sup>80</sup> Long, Churchill and Beatty, however, took the view that Britain would have to lay down new capital ships without delay if the one-Power standard were to be maintained and if the country were to have a strong hand in future naval arms limitation negotiations with the USA.<sup>81</sup> Such powerful advocates of the importance of the capital ship would never have accepted a scheme which envisaged its obsolescence. Further, these proposals clearly did not accord with the ambitions of the USA, Japan or Italy. The USA sought parity with Britain but the Plans Division scheme ensured a marked British superiority in cruiser strength. Japan would never have accepted disarmament proposals which not only abolished the capital ship, to which it attached such importance, but also gave France, as well as Britain and the USA, a greater aggregate tonnage. While Italy's preparations for the Washington Conference indicated that it was prepared to accept a Fleet limited in size to 80% of that of the French Navy, it was scarcely conceivable that it would agree to an aggregate tonnage only 51.85% of that of the French Navy.<sup>82</sup> Only the French might have been expected to look favourably on these disarmament proposals. This was because they had, as early as 1920, attached much greater importance to cruisers than to battleships and the tonnage allocated to them would have given them sufficient superiority over the Italians to maintain control of the Mediterranean.<sup>83</sup> It is highly doubtful, however, that they would have accepted such a low ratio compared with that of Britain.

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<sup>80</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.224

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, p.224

<sup>82</sup>Sullivan, B.R. 'Italian Naval Power and the Washington Disarmament Conference of 1921-22' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.227

<sup>83</sup>Blatt, J. 'France and the Washington Conference' and Sullivan, 'Italian Naval Power and the Washington Disarmament Conference of 1921-22' in *ibid.*, p.196 and p.238

The Plans Division's proposals were a very obvious attempt to maintain Britain's naval supremacy by aiming at the ultimate removal of the capital ship and basing naval strength on the cruiser, the very type of ship to which it attached so much importance for the task of trade defence. Despite this and the other criticisms which might be levelled against the proposals, they were also intended to initiate a disarmament process which would enable Britain to avoid having to choose between an expensive naval construction programme or the surrender of its naval supremacy. It was the only initiative of this type to emerge from official sources and its failure to progress beyond the Plans Division left Britain with no policy other than defence of the one-Power standard at a time when financial constraints were bearing down heavily on the Government. As a result, conflict between the Admiralty and the Treasury was inevitable over the 1921-22 estimates.

The Admiralty's original sketch estimates for 1921-22 totalled £98m but they had been reduced to £85.5m by December 1920 when they were submitted to the Cabinet. This lower figure was not acceptable to the Cabinet Finance Committee which, early in 1921, directed the Admiralty to prepare new sketch estimates which did not exceed £60m. The Admiralty, however, was clearly determined to resist the Treasury and, on 25 January 1921, re-submitted sketch estimates totalling £85m plus £4m for new construction.<sup>84</sup> On 18 February Long resigned due to ill health and his place as First Lord was taken by Viscount Lee of Fareham. It appears that Lloyd George wanted Lee to resist Admiralty influence and reduce naval expenditure.<sup>85</sup> Lee did submit a reduced estimate of

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<sup>84</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.226; Adm116/1775: memorandum by Lee, 'Navy Estimates, 1921-22', 28 February 1921

<sup>85</sup>Ferris, *op.cit.*, p.82

£82,879,000, including new construction, and his subsequent involvement in the Washington Conference was to undermine his standing with senior naval officers. He did, however, argue strongly in defence of the Admiralty's position, asserting that the Government had provided no basis for its policy other than the one-Power standard. Despite the gap between the reduced estimate and the Cabinet Finance Committee's figure of £60m, early in March 1921 the Chancellor agreed to a total of just under £80m plus £2.5m for the replacement of obsolete ships. Although there was general satisfaction with this in the Admiralty, Lee reported that he had been given a firm instruction that there were to be no supplementary estimates.<sup>86</sup>

The Admiralty had gained most of what it wanted for 1921-22 but it soon came under renewed pressure from the Treasury. The country's economic condition continued to deteriorate and in May 1921 the Chancellor ordered the Admiralty Board to review its current expenditure carefully with a view to producing significantly reduced estimates for 1922-23. The Admiralty responded by cutting its sketch estimates from £88m to £81m but then, in early August, submitted a supplementary estimate of nearly £12m, despite the Cabinet's instruction to the contrary only a few months before. The Admiralty once again got most of what it wanted but in the same month the Government appointed a Committee on National Expenditure under the chairmanship of Sir Eric Geddes. By the time it submitted its First Interim Report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Washington Conference was already well underway. The Geddes Committee had, however, recommended cuts in the estimates of all the Fighting Services for 1922-23; for the Navy the proposed reduction was from £81m to £60m. The reaction from the Fighting Services was so strong that the Cabinet

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<sup>86</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.226-227

set up a new Committee under Churchill, who was then Secretary of State for the Colonies, to adjudicate on the recommendations. The work of Churchill's Committee was very considerably eased by the success achieved at Washington as regards naval arms limitation.<sup>87</sup>

In the light of this worsening economic and financial situation it is hardly surprising that Britain favoured naval arms limitation but the Government had no clear policy for the achievement of such an objective and it had no intention at this stage of seeking to initiate disarmament. There can be little doubt that the crucial factor in the success of the Washington Conference, as far as naval arms limitation is concerned, was the changed political situation in the USA. By the end of 1920 it was clear that the US Congress was reluctant to provide the Navy Department with the funds it required for new naval construction: the Navy Department was able to continue work on the 1916 construction programme but it could not go beyond this.<sup>88</sup> In this respect US politics appeared very similar to the British situation but there was a key difference at this stage in that the new President, Warren Gamaliel Harding, who had been elected in November 1920, took the view that naval arms limitation was impractical. This was clearly demonstrated in May 1921 when he urged the Senate to support the Naval Appropriations Bill for 1921-22: this included funds for building more of the ships provided for in the 1916 construction programme. Harding was confronted, however, with what developed into powerful opposition from Senator William Borah. On 14 December 1920, Borah introduced a resolution requiring the summoning of a naval Conference so as to achieve a 50% reduction in the naval building programmes of Britain, Japan and the USA, and he threatened to filibuster the Naval Appropriations Bill unless this resolution

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<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.228-233

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, p.229

were accepted. Borah's resolution was passed with only four votes against it and the Senate added the extra funds to the Naval Appropriations Bill.<sup>89</sup>

As a result of this development it seemed that 'The initiative in Washington was now firmly in the hands of Borah and those in Congress who favoured the summoning of a naval conference outside the forum of the League of Nations'.<sup>90</sup> Harding was not, however, prepared to allow this loss of initiative to become permanent and, as both Hall and Buckley have shown, his decision to summon the Washington Conference was intended to wrest control of domestic politics from Borah and his supporters and to give the USA the leading role in international diplomacy.<sup>91</sup> This was no easy task for the Harding Administration had to satisfy the obvious public desire for a reduction in expenditure on the Navy while at the same time achieving naval parity with Britain and dealing with the perceived threat posed by Japanese policy in Korea, China and the Pacific. Policy options which involved either completion of the 1916 building programme or a decision to join the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in order to ensure influence in Asia, were most unlikely to win the support of the US Congress and public. This was because the Government would have been committing the country to significant expenditure on naval construction or taking on extensive international responsibilities. If the US Government decided to cut the naval budget, it would certainly win support from those whose prime concerns were financial, but it would not be able to exert any influence over either Britain or Japan. It was these concerns which prompted the US Government to pursue a policy which involved entering into an international naval arms limitation

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<sup>89</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.25; Northedge F.S. *The Troubled Giant - Britain among the Great Powers 1916-1939* (London: Bell, 1966), p.281; Goldstein, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16

<sup>90</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.25

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.* and Buckley, T.H. 'The Icarus Factor; the American pursuit of myth in naval arms control, 1921-36' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.124-146

agreement in exchange for an end to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and a settlement intended to limit Japanese ambitions in Asia and the Pacific. This involved a significant *volte-face* by Harding: previously the US President had rejected arms limitation as impractical but he now saw it as central to the success of his Administration in both domestic and foreign policy.<sup>92</sup>

A further encouragement for Harding to seek naval arms limitation through an international Conference held in Washington was the fact that Lloyd George was considering calling just such a Conference himself. In March 1921 Lee gave a speech to the Society of Naval Architects which conceded the principle of naval equality with the USA and was clearly intended to win favour with Harding.<sup>93</sup> The British Government followed this up in June by making enquiries in both the USA and Japan about the desirability of summoning an arms limitation Conference.<sup>94</sup> Had such a Conference been called as a result of a British initiative, Harding would obviously have found it more difficult to determine the Conference agenda and he would not have been able to demonstrate US leadership in international affairs. The US President, however, moved more quickly than Lloyd George. On 8 July the US Ambassadors in London, Paris, Rome and Tokyo were instructed to propose such a Conference to their Governments and on the following day the US Secretary of State, Charles Evan Hughes, proposed that discussion of Pacific and Far Eastern Affairs should also be placed on the agenda. Just two days later Harding announced his plans, which were welcomed by Lloyd George in a statement which he made to the House of Commons. The widening of the scope of the Conference to take in Pacific and Far Eastern affairs, in addition to naval arms

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<sup>92</sup>Buckley, *op.cit.*, pp.128-131

<sup>93</sup>Northedge, *The Troubled Giant*, pp.278-9

<sup>94</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.26

limitation, meant that the USA sent invitations to China, Holland, Portugal and Belgium, as well as to the other four major naval Powers.<sup>95</sup> Harding made it clear that he would not agree to the Conference taking place anywhere other than Washington: the initiative was very firmly with the USA.<sup>96</sup>

The decision to deal with Pacific and Far Eastern affairs at the Conference underlined the significance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance which would come to an end, if not renewed, on 13 July 1921. Early in the previous year the Foreign Office had indicated that it supported renewal as a counter-balance to a possible Soviet threat and that opinion in Japan was also favourable to renewal. The Admiralty, however, considered 'a continuation of the alliance neither necessary nor desirable' but a rather different view was expressed by Sir Auckland Geddes, the British Ambassador in Washington, in November 1920. He reported that, while public opinion in the USA would be hostile to a renewal of the Alliance, anti-British feeling was already so strong that it was unlikely to be exacerbated by its continuation. Geddes argued that it would be premature of the Government to announce that it did not intend to renew the Alliance, unless it attached over-riding importance to avoiding poor relations with the USA. He thought it would be more appropriate to renew the Alliance for four years, amending it in such a way as to bring it into line with the League Covenant.<sup>97</sup> Geddes' opinion in favour of renewal of the Alliance was supported in June 1921 by the CID. It was concerned that, if Britain engaged in naval construction in order to prevent its Navy being overtaken by those of Japan and the USA, there would also have to be heavy expenditure on developing its Far Eastern harbour

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<sup>95</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.301-302

<sup>96</sup>Northedge, *The Troubled Giant*, p.284

<sup>97</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.293



and oil-storing facilities so as to accommodate much larger ships. If the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were renewed, such expenditure could, at least, be delayed.<sup>98</sup>

A further factor which the British Government had to take into account in deciding the future of the Japanese Alliance was the state of Dominion opinion, particularly as there was an Imperial Conference in the summer of 1921. The Conference opened on 20 June and Lloyd George's references to Japan did not make clear the Government's intentions concerning the Alliance. He spoke favourably of Japan but also stressed the importance of maintaining good relations with the USA.<sup>99</sup> The other Dominion Prime Ministers who were directly concerned with relations between Britain, Japan and the USA were, however, less equivocal. Hughes of Australia and Massey of New Zealand were very much in favour of renewal, largely because they were fearful of the threat which the Japanese Navy posed to their security and lacked confidence in Britain's ability and the USA's desire to help them in the event of conflict in the Pacific. By contrast, Meighen, the Canadian Prime Minister, was a powerful advocate of a policy which stressed the importance of good Anglo-US relations. He argued that renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would harm these relations and damage the prospects of concluding a naval arms limitation treaty. Meighen was, of course, influenced by the fact that Canada and the USA had the same concerns over the security of the North American continent and immigration from Japan. In both the short and medium terms Meighen emerged victorious: the Imperial Conference ended without there being any statement of its attitude to renewal of the Alliance and at Washington it was replaced with the Four-Power Pacific Treaty.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Goldstein, *op.cit.* pp.14-15

<sup>99</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.296

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, pp296-7 and Northedge, *The Troubled Giant*, pp.282-3

McKercher has argued that the financial and economic pressures which operated on the British Government in the immediate post-war years made it a willing participant in the Washington Conference.<sup>101</sup> This view is tenable if willingness is taken to mean acceptance of the invitation to attend the Conference. If, however, willingness is measured by a desire to make the Conference a success and the belief that such success could be achieved, it is impossible to agree that Britain was a willing participant. Fry, Goldstein and Hall have each drawn attention to the British Government's very limited preparations for the Conference.<sup>102</sup> Britain had wanted a preliminary conference with the USA at which the two nations would have been able to agree the basic principles for a settlement of the situation in the Pacific and a reduction in the US Government's naval building programme. Harding's Administration rejected this proposal, however, a decision which so irritated Curzon that he determined to allow the USA to organize every aspect of the Conference proper and thereby take the blame if it failed. Three other key British officials - Geddes, Victor Wellesley and Crowe - doubted that the US decision-makers had sufficient grasp of the international situation to be able to organize a successful Conference. Crowe thought it most unlikely that they had worked out a practical scheme for arms reduction, although it must be remembered that Crowe's general view was that this was, in any case, an impossible task. Lloyd George's unwillingness to attend the Conference and his selection of Conservatives to represent Britain suggests that he thought it would end in a failure with which he wanted neither himself nor the Lloyd George Liberals directly associated.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>McKercher, *op.cit.*, p.43

<sup>102</sup>Fry, *op.cit.* pp.p.74; Goldstein, *op.cit.* pp.18-23; Hall, *op.cit.*, p.28

<sup>103</sup>Goldstein, *op.cit.*, pp.18-21

Although Balfour's experience as a former First Lord of the Admiralty, Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister and experienced member of the CID made him a powerful leader of the British delegation, he had spent the three months prior to the opening of the Washington Conference in Geneva representing Britain at the League and, when first asked to take on this role, had suggested that Law would be a more appropriate figure. Balfour only agreed after Law had declined the invitation.<sup>104</sup> Given Balfour's own lack of enthusiasm for the task and the fact that the Government sent him to Washington without a negotiating brief, it is very much to his credit that the British delegation worked so effectively. He largely overcame his Government's inadequate preparation for the Conference by developing his own negotiating brief between 2 and 8 November as he crossed the Atlantic. Balfour understood that the Cabinet wanted the British delegation 'to secure the largest possible limitation of armaments consistent with the safety of the British Empire' but he considered that this could only be achieved if the political difficulties in the Pacific and China were resolved. As a result of this thinking the British approach to disarmament at Washington was based on the indirect or political method.<sup>105</sup>

Balfour attached the greatest importance to the question of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance which would clearly be a difficult problem to resolve because it was viewed differently by the Governments of the USA, Japan and Britain's Pacific Dominions. He was aware that the USA was strongly opposed to a continuation of the Alliance and regarded its termination as essential for the successful negotiation of an arms limitation agreement. Yet, although the weakness of both the Soviet Union and Germany meant that Britain no longer had the same need for the security which the Alliance offered, Balfour

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p.22

<sup>105</sup>DBFP, No.415, Balfour to Lloyd George, 11 November 1921

considered that 'we are bound to give the utmost consideration to the feelings of an ally who has loyally stood by his engagements and rendered us valuable support in the late war, and we cannot contemplate any action calculated to alienate, much less to outrage, Japanese sentiment'.<sup>106</sup> This thinking was reinforced in his mind by the pro-Alliance sentiments which had been expressed at the recent Imperial Conference by Australia and New Zealand. He proposed, therefore, a tripartite agreement between Britain, the USA and Japan, the essential features of which would terminate the Anglo-Japanese Alliance without offending Japan, avoid military commitments which would be unacceptable to the USA and reassure Australia and New Zealand as to their security.<sup>107</sup> In addition to these proposals concerning the three major naval Powers, Balfour also set out for Lloyd George a draft agreement relating to China which was 'based on the desirability of substituting a system of international co-operation for the international rivalry in China which has in the past produced such unhappy results in that country'.<sup>108</sup>

The striking feature of Balfour's approach was that he gave greater importance to the political and security issues in China and the Pacific than he did to the details of naval arms limitation which was held to be the principal objective of the British delegation at Washington. This was in marked contrast to the US Government which sprung on the Conference at its first plenary session a detailed and radical set of proposals for naval arms limitation. This emerged as a result of a significant difference in the attitudes of the General Board of the US Navy on the one hand and Harding and Hughes on the other. The General Board favoured naval arms limitation but only after the existing

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

construction programme had been completed, providing them with a capital ship strength of nearly 1m tons by 1927 and parity with the British Navy. Under pressure from the State Department, the General Board reduced its requirements to 820,000 tons and declared that it could not go below this figure but this was not sufficient for the President and his Secretary of State. On 31 October the US delegation to the Conference decided to propose a much more dramatic programme of naval arms limitation.<sup>109</sup> This occurred because the USA's political leaders were prepared, in advance of the Conference, to assert their dominance of the naval officers. It is highly likely that there would not have been a naval arms limitation agreement had the British Government not been prepared to do the same at the Conference, even though it had not done so previously.

The US naval arms limitation proposals, which Hughes had gone to considerable and successful lengths to keep secret, were presented to the delegates to the Washington Conference at its opening session on 12 November 1921. They involved the scrapping of all capital ship building programmes, acceptance of the existing strength of the naval Powers as the standard of the relative strength they should retain, the use of capital ship tonnage as the measure of naval strength, the scrapping by Britain, Japan and the USA of 1,876,043 tons of ships already built or under construction, a ten year holiday as regards capital ship building, a limitation of 35,000 tons displacement on all new ships and acceptance, subject to the ten year holiday, of twenty years as the age limit for replacement. Neither France nor Italy were required to reduce their capital ship strengths because at that time they were not engaged on any building programmes. Once the naval holiday was over the Powers would be able to replace capital ships which were twenty years old so that, by 1942, the maximum

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<sup>109</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.307-309; Davis G.T., A Navy Second to None (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971), pp.277-278

replacement tonnages would be reached. These were 500,000 tons for Britain and the USA, 300,000 tons for Japan and 175,000 tons each for France and Italy. By this means the capital ship ratios of 5: 5: 3: 1.75: 1.75 would be reached for these five Powers. Hughes also put forward proposals to limit the auxiliary ships - cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers and submarines - of the three major Powers and it became clear later at the Conference that he also favoured the application of the capital ship ratio to the auxiliary ships of France and Italy.<sup>110</sup>

In view of the British Government's long-standing desire to bring an end to the possibility of naval arms competition with the USA and its publicly stated acceptance of the one-Power standard, it was not surprising that, on hearing these proposals, 'The British could hardly hide their intense elation over the disclosure of a dazzling victory for the Empire won without a struggle'.<sup>111</sup> When Balfour accepted Hughes' proposals in principle at the next plenary session of the Conference on 15 November, he was confirming that Britain was prepared both to share naval supremacy with the USA and to reduce its own Fleet.<sup>112</sup> This did not mean, however, that Britain was entirely satisfied and Balfour indicated that it required more cruisers and destroyers than were allowed for in the USA's scheme. Beatty was also strongly opposed to the ten year naval holiday on the grounds that it 'would result in decay of naval ship construction and armament industries unless firms were heavily subsidized'. He favoured instead an 'alternative scheme of substituting slow and steady replacement for spasmodic building'.<sup>113</sup> In this view he received support from Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith, Economic Adviser to the Government and Head of the Economic Section of the

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<sup>110</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.310-311; Davis, *op.cit.*, pp277 and 286-289

<sup>111</sup>Davis, *op.cit.*, p.277

<sup>112</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.4

<sup>113</sup>DBFP, 417, Balfour to Curzon, undated

British delegation at Washington, who argued that the 'American proposal for ten years' holiday would result in violent fluctuation in employment'.<sup>114</sup> On 15 November, however, Lloyd George made his own views on this issue very clear:

We feel that the sovereign virtue of the naval holiday consists in the fact that there will for ten years be a complete cessation of capital shipbuilding. There will be no rivalry in improved designs between the three great Naval Powers, and the existing fleets which they are to keep will not be rendered obsolete by the appearance of superior capital vessels. We feel that this advantage far outweighs the convenience of keeping armament plants in moderate activity by spreading replacements slowly over the ten years' holiday period. It also outweighs the inconvenience of having to make a sudden expansion of shipbuilding plants at the end of the period. We would rather keep the necessary plant in existence by subsidies than mar the effect to world peace of the ten years' holiday by building new battleships.<sup>115</sup>

Balfour favoured Beatty's scheme but the issue was finally decided on 10 December when Balfour read to the British delegation a personal telegram from Lloyd George stating that the Cabinet agreed to the ten years' holiday.<sup>116</sup> In just the same way that Harding and Hughes had over-ruled the General Board concerning the proposals which were to be made to the Conference on 12

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<sup>114</sup>DBFP, 418, Balfour to Curzon, 14 November 1921

<sup>115</sup>DBFP, 420, Curzon to Balfour, 12 November 1921

<sup>116</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.314-315

November, the Cabinet over-ruled the Admiralty and its Economic Adviser regarding this important issue.

The determination of the British and US Governments to reach agreement on naval armaments did not mean that a limitation treaty was a foregone conclusion. As Maurer has convincingly shown, there was a need for compromise on several key issues.<sup>117</sup> Japan's chief delegate, Baron Tomosaburo Kato, the Minister for the Navy, would have liked a higher ratio for the Japanese Navy and he stressed the importance of its retaining the *Mutsu*, its new battleship which was 98% complete when the Washington Conference opened. The agreement which was reached on this issue allowed Japan to keep the *Mutsu* but it had to scrap one of its older battleships. The USA was allowed to keep the two ships of its 1916 programme which were closest to completion - the *Colorado* and *Washington* - but had to scrap its two oldest Dreadnoughts and Britain was allowed to build two new battleships of a maximum 35,000 tons displacement. This was a pleasing outcome for the Admiralty as it meant that it was able to build the battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney*.<sup>118</sup> The result of these changes was that the battleship tonnages for Britain and the USA were increased to 525,000 tons by 1942 and for Japan to 315,000 tons.<sup>119</sup>

There was also a danger that the emerging agreement would be wrecked by the French demand for a battleship ratio equal to that of Japan and superior to that of Italy. Neither Britain nor Italy, however, was prepared to accept this and the head of the French delegation, Prime Minister Aristide Briand, gave way, despite strong objections from his chief technical adviser, Admiral de Bon. This French concession on the battleship ratio was matched by a determination

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<sup>117</sup>Maurer, J. 'Arms Control and the Washington Conference' in Goldstein and Maurer (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.267-293

<sup>118</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.315-318; Maurer, *op.cit.*, p.280

<sup>119</sup>Davis, *op.cit.*, p.297



to resist restrictions on the building of cruisers, destroyers and submarines below the figures which de Bon had put forward - 330,000 tons of cruisers and destroyers and 90,000 tons of submarines.<sup>120</sup> French intransigence over cruisers suited the Admiralty because it, too, opposed Hughes' proposals regarding this class of ships. At Washington, Beatty asserted that Britain's colonial and trading interests were so extensive that its cruiser needs were absolute and could not be related to the strengths of other nations.<sup>121</sup> Britain held to this doctrine of absolute requirements in cruiser strength throughout the 1920s and 1930s but at Washington it was able to allow France to take responsibility for the failure to reach anything other than agreement that cruisers should be armed with nothing larger than eight inch guns and should not exceed 10,000 tons displacement.

It was not only necessary for the Powers to compromise on these technical details in order to reach agreement on the limitation of naval armaments. Although Hughes had not made any dramatic proposals concerning the Pacific and Far Eastern affairs when he opened the Conference on 12 November, it was clear that the US Government saw the issues of security and naval arms limitation as being inextricably linked. This fact reveals the wisdom of the negotiating position set out by Balfour in his despatch of 11 November to Lloyd George. The Four Power Treaty between Britain, France, Japan and the USA was very important for the Harding Administration because it ended the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and required these Powers only to consult in the event of a dispute between them in the Pacific, thereby exempting the USA from military or naval commitments. A key figure in the US delegation was Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and majority leader of the Senate. Following the conclusion of the Conference, 'Senator

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<sup>120</sup>Maurer, *op.cit.*, p.280

<sup>121</sup>Hall, *op.cit.*, p.29

Lodge made the tie between the naval treaty and the Four-Power Treaty very explicit by scheduling the vote [in the Senate] on the latter treaty first and by stating that its ratification must precede that of the naval treaty'.<sup>122</sup>

Just as the Four Power Treaty was essential to US acceptance of the naval agreement, Japanese acceptance of the capital ship ratio would have been inconceivable had Britain and the USA not accepted a freeze on the construction of naval bases in the Pacific. It was accepted that Britain would not fortify Hong Kong, the USA would not fortify Manila or Guam and Japan would abandon its plans to fortify Formosa, the Pescadores and Oshima. The effect of this agreement was that the nearest British naval base to Japan would be Singapore and the nearest US base would be Hawaii, which was 3,800 miles away.<sup>123</sup> As a result, Japan emerged from the Washington Conference as the dominant Power in the Western Pacific but this was clearly the price which Britain and the USA had to pay in order to secure its acceptance of the principal features of the Naval Limitation Treaty.

A further security issue which might have prevented a naval arms limitation agreement at Washington concerned Anglo-French relations and the connection between land and air arms on the one hand and naval arms on the other. In three Foreign Office despatches of 22 and 23 November, Lloyd George and Curzon made clear to Balfour at Washington their serious fears about the growing strength of France's land forces and the extent of its air power.<sup>124</sup> Although these documents referred to the existing good relations between Britain and France, their tone revealed the serious decline in Anglo-French relations since the end of the Great War. According to the assessments of the

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<sup>122</sup>Buckley, *op.cit.*, p. 132

<sup>123</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp. 315-316

<sup>124</sup>DBFP, 439, Curzon to Balfour, 22 November 1921; DBFP, 442 and 443, Curzon to Balfour, 23 November 1921

General Staff, France would have an Army in excess of 4m men by 1923, compared with the 3,304,000 which it had available on the outbreak of war in 1914, and the Air Staff estimated that 'France could drop thirty-one tons of bombs daily on London and the south-east of England and thirteen tons every night, without allowing for the use that might be made of their civilian aircraft'.<sup>125</sup> These assessments served only to reinforce the CID's fears that France was building a submarine fleet which would be capable of establishing 'a mortal blockade of Great Britain'.<sup>126</sup> This combination of factors prompted Lloyd George to inform Balfour that 'we cannot contemplate a result of the Washington Conference which would leave France and other European nations as powerfully armed as before while we alone having already reduced the army and the air force to the minimum had also bound ourselves to a great reduction of the navy'.<sup>127</sup>

If the Cabinet had compelled Balfour to follow this line it is most unlikely that there would have been an agreement between the five principal naval Powers. Balfour, however, realized that there was very little chance of persuading France and Italy to agree to the abolition of submarines and that France would only consent to a reduction in its land and air forces if Britain and the USA were prepared to guarantee its security. He did, though, believe that it would be possible to achieve a reduction of naval armaments and a settlement of the situation in the Pacific and Far East and that it would be a mistake to throw away this opportunity in pursuit of the impossible. In a gently ironic way he poured scorn on the instructions which he had received from Lloyd George and Curzon:

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<sup>125</sup>DBFP, 443, Curzon to Balfour, 23 November 1921

<sup>126</sup>DBFP, 442, Curzon to Balfour, 23 November 1921

<sup>127</sup>DBFP, 439, Curzon to Balfour, 22 November 1921

I am to try, if possible, to induce the French to agree to a very small battle fleet so as to leave us free to accept American proposals without modification. Having persuaded them to deprive themselves of their form of naval defence I am then to persuade them that they really require no submarines because a war between France and England is unthinkable. This task being successfully accomplished, I am then to ask them to reduce the number of their aircraft seeing that we cannot sleep securely in our beds lest in a war with France, London should be burnt to the ground ! For a task so complex as this I fear a trained diplomatist is required. But I will do my best.<sup>128</sup>

Balfour was, of course, not solely responsible for the agreement reached at Washington but his realism was undoubtedly a powerful, positive factor and contributed to the praise he received from contemporaries, such as Hankey, and the earldom which he received in May 1922.<sup>129</sup>

The Washington Conference, in combining elements of Hughes' carefully constructed technical plan for a reduction in naval armaments with a willingness to address important security issues affecting especially the positions of Britain, Japan and the USA in the Far East, was very successful for Britain in a number of important respects. Prior to the Conference there were decision-makers who thought that their post-war fear would be realized and that Britain and the USA would embark on a major naval arms race which would be ruinously expensive.<sup>130</sup> The Naval Limitation Treaty ensured that this did not happen and

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<sup>128</sup>DBFP, 448, Balfour to Curzon, 24 November, 1921

<sup>129</sup>Mackay, R.F. Balfour - intellectual statesman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.331

<sup>130</sup>Maurer, op.cit., pp.286-287

Britain was able to reduce its expenditure on the Navy. The naval estimates for 1922-23 were £64,883,700, a reduction of £17,595,300 on those for 1921-22 and, in introducing the estimates for 1923-24, Amery stated that the Washington Conference had saved the country £15-20m p.a..<sup>131</sup> The agreement regarding the construction and fortification of naval bases in the Pacific also provided security for Australia because Japan could not build a naval base from which any attack against it could be launched. As a result, Australia was able to reduce its naval forces and its defence budget and focus instead on economic growth.<sup>132</sup>

In other respects the outcomes of the Conference were not so beneficial for Britain. The failure to reach agreement on cruisers, destroyers and submarines left the way open for competition in these auxiliary vessels. There is indeed a case for the argument that the agreement regarding capital ships stimulated such competition. The situation in the Pacific in the longer term was also far from clear. It had been agreed at the Imperial Conference that Britain should build a naval base at Singapore which would enable its Navy, based in home and Mediterranean waters, to go to the Pacific to deal with any crisis which might arise. This strategy might have made it possible for Britain to enhance its security in the Pacific but no decision had been taken at that stage as to when construction of the Singapore naval base would begin and, even when it was completed, it would not provide security against a simultaneous threat in Europe and the Pacific.<sup>133</sup>

The Conference has also been criticised from the perspective of disarmament. Although he saw it as being a moderate success, Madariaga observed that this was because it worked as 'an Armaments Conference' in that

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<sup>131</sup>Chaput, *op.cit.*, pp.125

<sup>132</sup>Fry, *op.cit.*, p.93

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.94-96

the Powers were concerned 'to maintain and if possible improve their relative armaments'.<sup>134</sup> He put this same view forward in an amusing story about five wealthy bankers in Renaissance Italy who agreed, under financial pressures, to restrict the number of their mistresses. The outcome of their discussions was that the two wealthiest bankers were allowed five each, the next was allowed three and the other two were permitted to keep one each and pay occasional visits to another. These decisions were then presented by the five as being made out of respect for the sacrament of marriage.<sup>135</sup> Madariaga took the view that Powers would always be motivated by a cynical perception of their own self-interest until there was a community of nations based upon a recognized system of international law. In the absence of such a community, armaments, he argued, are a symptom of international suspicion and tension, not a cause:

And therefore to want disarmament before a minimum of common agreement on fundamentals is as absurd as to want people to go undressed in winter. Let the weather be warm, and people will discard their clothes readily and without committees to tell them how they are to undress.<sup>136</sup>

This metaphor misses a vital point, however, about the relationship between armaments and international relations. Although the weather will not be affected by the amount of clothes people wear, commitment by significant Powers to a disarmament process can have a beneficial impact on the climate of international affairs. The Powers who gathered at Washington were certainly concerned to

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<sup>134</sup>Madariaga, S. de Morning without Noon - Memoirs (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1974), p.72

<sup>135</sup>Madariaga, Disarmament, pp.99-101

<sup>136</sup>Madariaga, Morning without Noon, pp.48

improve their armaments position relative to each other but the experience of negotiating a multi-lateral arms limitation agreement did bring about a significant improvement in international relations. Although Anglo-US naval rivalry continued, it was more limited in scope than it might otherwise have been and the agreement did stimulate efforts to achieve more broad-ranging disarmament through the League. Far from being separate from the process of creating a more co-operative international environment, disarmament is an important element in that process. The Washington Conference not only brought to an end a very difficult period for those British decision-makers concerned with naval policy, it also gave an indication of what could be achieved if political leaders were sufficiently committed to the process to assert their authority and it stimulated further attempts to bring about disarmament through the League. The British Government had stumbled, almost by accident, on a new approach to defence and foreign policy.

## Chapter 6 - Naval Disarmament 1922-24

The Washington Conference 1921-22 was viewed with some suspicion by League enthusiasts because it threatened to undermine the importance of Geneva as the focus of attempts to bring about the limitation and control of armaments by international agreement.<sup>1</sup> The Treaties concluded as a result of this Conference brought about arms reduction, in the short term at least, but they do not satisfy the definition of disarmament used in this thesis because the decision-makers were concerned primarily with product, to the exclusion of process. The achievement of the British delegation led by Balfour, however much importance might be attached to it, did not reveal that the Government was committed to the process of arms control and limitation through general international agreement. It is the case, however, that the generally perceived success of the Washington Conference was seen by some to offer an opportunity to extend naval disarmament through the League and to reassert the primacy of process over simple product.

From 1922-24 there was a serious attempt within the League to bring about an extension of the principles which were held to underpin the Naval Limitation Treaty agreed at Washington. This attempt culminated in February 1924 in what has often been referred to as the Rome Naval Conference but was in fact a special meeting of the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC. This Conference and the negotiations which preceded it have received scant attention from historians largely, no doubt, because they brought no tangible outcome. It is also true that in the period 1922-24 Cecil's draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee and then the Geneva Protocol were of much greater importance to

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<sup>1</sup>Towle, op.cit., p.130



contemporary decision-makers. It is, perhaps, not surprising, therefore, that those interested in the study of arms limitation and control through the League have focused on these initiatives rather than on the attempt to extend the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty. For their part, historians of naval arms limitation in the 1920s have focused on the Washington Conference itself, and the Conferences which took place at Geneva in 1927 and London in 1930. Yet, despite the fact that the attempt to extend the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty to non-signatory Powers was overshadowed by these more wide-ranging proposals to achieve disarmament, it merits detailed consideration.

Unlike the other proposals to achieve disarmament through the League which are considered in this study, the attempt to extend the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty to non-signatory Powers emerged not from League idealists but from within a British institution which would normally be classified as ultra-realist, namely, the Admiralty. Although it was put forward within the TMC, it came from Captain John Roderick Segrave, the Admiralty's representative on the PAC from 1920 to 1923. The course of events from the conclusion of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty to the eve of the Fourth League Assembly in September 1923 appears to indicate that the Admiralty was committed to the idea of extending the principles of that Treaty to non-signatory Powers, even to the extent of proposing means by which the Soviet Union might be included in the scheme, despite the fact that Britain had not yet recognized its Government and that it was not a member of the League. Segrave was the official representative of the Admiralty and so it is reasonable to assume that his scheme was put forward 'with at any rate the full knowledge, and presumably the

assent of the Admiralty'.<sup>2</sup> Although there is no direct evidence in support of such an assessment, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Admiralty saw in League action the prospect of a wide-ranging agreement which could only benefit Britain's naval position. The draft Convention that emerged from the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC involved no extension of Britain's naval commitments and, if translated into an international treaty, limited the extent to which the Admiralty would have to concern itself with naval expansion by other Powers. In short, the Admiralty recognized that League institutions could be used to serve Britain's best interests. In advancing and supporting the extension of the Washington principles the Admiralty was not, however, on the available evidence, revealing an overt commitment to the process of disarmament. Rather, it appears that the Admiralty saw an opportunity to achieve through the League a desirable outcome, namely, naval arms limitation by low risk means. Its approach, therefore, was thoroughly pragmatic and concerned with the armaments question as an element of internal policy.

Segrave's initiative did, however, expose disagreements between those within the Foreign Office sympathetic to disarmament and those hostile to it, on the one hand, and between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office on the other. As negotiations at Geneva developed, differences of strategy between the Washington signatory Powers which were members of the League and between some of the smaller naval Powers also emerged. These differences, together with a shift to an overly ambitious policy by the League, in large part explain why no Convention resulted from this attempt at international disarmament. The failure to achieve an agreement has prompted Towle and Roskill to conclude that the Rome Conference was a complete failure, though their respective analyses are

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<sup>2</sup>Adm116/2184: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

hardly detailed.<sup>3</sup> At the time, however, there were observers, such as Rear Admiral Aubrey Smith, Britain's representative on the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC from 1923 to 1927, whose assessment of the Rome Conference was more sanguine, and although it cannot be regarded as a success, there is definitely a case for viewing the Conference in a more positive light now that the records of the Conference are fully available.

In February 1922, the same month in which the Washington Conference completed its work, Segrave put before the TMC a proposal that the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty be extended to the non-signatory Powers who were members of the League. At the July session of the TMC Segrave followed up this proposal by putting forward a draft Convention by which it might be achieved. Similar schemes were put forward by the Marquis di Saluzzo, the Italian representative, and by Colonel Réquin, the French representative. In response to these initiatives the TMC approved the proposal to extend the principles of the Treaty to the non-signatory Powers and requested the Council to refer the three draft Conventions to the PAC so that the Naval Sub-Commission could consider the scheme and report on it. The TMC requested the PAC to present its report by the end of July so that the TMC could consider the matter again before the Third League Assembly in September 1922. By setting this timetable the TMC hoped to be able to present definite proposals for the extension of the principles of the Treaty to the non-signatory Powers to the 1922 Assembly, together with a recommendation that an international Conference be summoned in order to draw up a treaty.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC adhered to the timetable requested by the TMC, presenting its report on 26 July 1922 together

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<sup>3</sup>Towle, *op.cit.*, p.136 and Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.427

<sup>4</sup>FO371/7256: letter by Drummond to League members, 14 August 1922

with a single draft Convention drawn from the three schemes previously submitted, certain problems arose immediately between the major and minor naval Powers represented on the Commission. Of these six Powers, four were signatories to the Washington Treaties, namely, Britain , France, Italy and Japan - the others were Spain and Brazil. In the first instance the representatives of the Powers had to decide the principles on which the proposed Convention should be based. The Washington signatory Powers thought that it should be based upon the principle of maintaining the status quo. The Brazilian and Spanish representatives, Admiral Penido and the Marquis de Magaz respectively, took a quite different view. They based their position on Article 8 of the Covenant of the League and argued that the most important principles were those of national security, geographical situation and special circumstances which might affect a country's naval requirements. They held that because the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty did not take place under the auspices of the League, its signatories were able to take decisions without reference to the Covenant but such freedom of action could not and should not apply to a treaty negotiated through the institutions of the League. When this Hispano-Brazilian position was put to the vote it was rejected by four votes to two, the Sub-Commission dividing between Washington signatory and non-signatory Powers. The immediate result was that Penido refused to co-operate in the work of the Sub-Commission and he thereafter abstained from voting. Margaz, however, participated in the subsequent discussions, subject to the reservation that he was speaking personally and that his remarks in no way bound his Government.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>FO371/7256: Report of the Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent Advisory Commission on the Extension of the Washington Naval Treaty to the Non-Signatory Powers Members of the League of Nations, 26 July 1922

As a result of the discussions between the five representatives prepared to continue with their work, the Sub-Commission was able to draw up a single draft Convention, although Margaz made reservations on the tonnage allocated to Spain.<sup>6</sup> This draft Convention followed the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty in laying down direct limitation of total tonnage for capital ships only, that is, vessels which exceeded 10,000 tons or carried a gun with a calibre in excess of 8 inches. As with the Washington Treaty, it also took as its basis for estimating replacement tonnage the status quo on 12 November 1921 and laid down a naval holiday, a period of ten years from the same date, during which no capital ship was to be laid down. Despite the fact that these principles were drawn from the Washington Treaty, the purpose of the draft Convention was quite different from it, as was explicitly recognized by the Sub-Commission. The objective of the Washington Powers had been to carry out reductions to large navies and impose limitations as to their future size whereas the purpose of the draft Convention was only to impose limitations on future naval building 'so eliminating the unknown factor and preventing competition in navies or the fear of such competition'.<sup>7</sup> The articles which dealt with aircraft carriers did permit an increase in tonnage as Powers were allowed to construct carriers up to a total tonnage equal to one third of their total capital ship tonnage. This decision was defended on the ground that the relevant articles amounted to 'a limitation on future development of a new and experimental type of ship, as did the similar clauses of the Treaty of Washington'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>See Appendix 1 for the text of the draft Convention for the Extension of the Washington Naval Treaty to the Non-Signatory Powers of the League of Nations, 27 July 1922.

<sup>7</sup>FO371/7256: Report of the Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent Advisory Commission on the Extension of the Washington Naval Treaty to the Non-Signatory Powers Members of the League of Nations, 26 July 1922

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

At the outset Penido and Margaz had clearly considered that the principle of maintaining the status quo meant that their countries would not be able to increase the size of their Navies. Their concern on this point appears, however, to have been misplaced for the Sub-Commission, which in reality meant the Washington signatory Powers, intended that its draft Convention would be examined by an international Conference which would take into account the special needs and conditions of each State and, just as had been done at Washington, make appropriate modifications to the principle of the status quo. This flexible approach was to characterize the position of the British Admiralty in all negotiations on the issue. Such modifications, though, could not be proposed by the Sub-Commission because from the nine Powers in the League which possessed capital ships and were not signatories to the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty, only the Brazilian and Spanish representatives were present.<sup>9</sup> The Sub-Commission also envisaged the final Convention being signed not just by these nine Powers but by all the League Powers which were not signatories to the Washington Treaty. This was because although the draft Convention only laid down tonnage limits for capital ships, it did contain provisions limiting the size and armaments of other ships. It was, therefore, considered appropriate that League members which did not possess capital ships should also be parties to the Convention.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the very clear differences between the Brazilian and Spanish representatives on the one side and those of Britain, France, Italy and Japan on the other, the Naval Sub-Commission had responded swiftly and effectively to the scheme initiated by Segrave from within the TMC. The single draft Convention which it had drawn up marked the start of a disarmament process

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. and Appendix 1

which offered some prospect of real achievement. At this stage, however, the main work had been done by the representatives of the four League Powers which were signatories to the Washington Treaty: if there were to be a Convention the agreement of forty two other Powers would have to be secured. The Brazilian and Spanish opposition to the principle of the status quo indicated that reaching such an agreement would be no easy task. The TMC was, nevertheless, able to adhere to its original timetable and in September it adopted the Sub-Commission's draft Convention proposing that this should serve as a basis for an international Conference to consider the question.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, at this meeting the TMC also went beyond the scheme as originally envisaged and recommended that all States, whether they were members of the League or not should be invited to participate in this Conference.<sup>12</sup> This was to prove a crucial error taken in disregard of the prevailing diplomatic realities. In particular, it meant that the Soviet Union would have to be included in the disarmament talks and, given the nature of the Bolshevik Government and its relationship with other States regarding the wars of intervention against it, this was always likely to create serious problems and make the likelihood of a successful conclusion more remote. There can be no doubt that the more limited of policy of seeking the extension of the Washington Treaty to League Powers only was the wiser course.

When the TMC's recommendations came before the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments) of the Third League Assembly later in September, they were not approved without opposition. As was the case in the Naval Sub-Commission, it was the Brazilian delegate who expressed dissatisfaction with the

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<sup>11</sup>Adm116/2184: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

<sup>12</sup>FO371/8319: Report of the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments) to the Third Assembly, 22 September 1922

course of action being proposed. Brazil took the entirely reasonable view that 'disarmament for States at the height of their naval power was one thing, disarmament for a State such as Brazil, which was growing in economic and political importance and which was only beginning to develop [sic] what it regarded as a Navy adequate to its needs, was a wholly different proposition'.<sup>13</sup> This clearly meant that naval disarmament within the League should not be achieved on the basis of the status quo for this would disadvantage developing States and those States which had been created since the end of the Great War and had yet to develop a navy. The Third Commission was not prepared to allow this concern to become an obstacle to further progress and it agreed that the Conference envisaged should not be bound by the draft Convention which the Naval Sub-Commission had produced.<sup>14</sup> This enabled the Third Committee to recommend that the Assembly adopt a resolution embodying the proposals of the TMC.<sup>15</sup> When the Assembly met, this was sufficient to win a pledge from the Brazilian delegate that his Government would participate in the Conference so long as it was understood that it would not take measures which departed from the letter and spirit of Article 8 of the Covenant.<sup>16</sup>

Although the principle of basing naval disarmament on the maintenance of the status quo was likely to cause further problems, the recommendation that all States should participate in the proposed Conference was a source of much greater difficulty. This recommendation was unanimously agreed by the Third

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<sup>13</sup>FO371/8319: Notes on the work of the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments) at the Third Assembly of the League of Nations 1922, 21 October 1922

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>FO371/8319: Report of the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments) to the Third Assembly, 22 September 1922

<sup>16</sup>FO371/8319: Notes on the work of the Third Committee (Reduction of Armaments) at the Third Assembly of the League of Nations 1922, 21 October 1922



Assembly and it meant that Germany, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Hungary, Mexico, Ecuador, Hedjas and San Domingo would be invited to attend the Conference.<sup>17</sup> The last four mentioned States did not possess capital ships and so they could simply be added to the list of signatory Powers referred to in Article 1 of the draft Convention.<sup>18</sup> Turkey's involvement would depend on the outcome of the negotiations following the Chanak crisis; and Hungary had just been allowed to join the League by the Third Assembly so it would be able to sign the Convention on the same basis as that of the other ex-enemy States, Austria and Bulgaria, who had already joined the League. Although Germany was not yet a member of the League, Segrave stated that it too would be able to sign the Convention on the terms proposed for Austria and Bulgaria, namely, 'that she shall accept the limitations of the Convention "in so far as they are applicable and are additional to the limitations already accepted" '.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet Union, however, was a very different case.

The Soviet Navy was not limited by any treaty and was substantially larger than the Navies of the other Powers which were to be invited to participate in the League disarmament conference. In a report of 17 October, therefore, Segrave suggested that the Soviets should be required to *reduce* their Navy, as the Washington Powers were doing, rather than being treated on the same basis as the smaller naval Powers and not being required to scrap any ships or abandon any construction programmes. But if this were the case, it would hardly be possible to include the Soviet Union in the same Convention as the other Powers because it would be treated entirely differently. Segrave proposed, therefore, that the Soviets agree to a protocol by which they would adhere to the

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<sup>17</sup>Adm116/2184: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923; FO371/7257: report by Segrave, 17 October 1922

<sup>18</sup>See Appendix 1

<sup>19</sup>FO371/7257: report by Segrave, 17 October 1922

Washington Naval Limitation Treaty and scrap 207,162 tonnage of ships, leaving a total tonnage of 175,080 tons and a replacement tonnage allowance of 175,000 tons, equal to that of France and Italy. The Soviet Union would also be allowed the same total tonnage for aircraft carriers as France and Italy, namely, 60,000 tons. Segrave calculated that this would be a reduction of 54% in the Soviet Fleet as compared with an average reduction of 51% for the Washington signatories.<sup>20</sup>

In this detailed report it is, perhaps, surprising that Segrave made no reference to the fact that Britain did not recognize the Soviet Government. However, in seeking the opinion of the Foreign Office on Segrave's proposals, the Admiralty emphasised the problem: if Soviet naval forces were limited either by a protocol to the Washington Treaty or as a result of their participation at a League Conference, the Soviet Government would have to be recognized.<sup>21</sup> This was too much for the Foreign Office, which reacted as though its primacy in foreign policy was being usurped - perhaps not surprisingly given the circumstances. Thus, the Foreign Office response to Segrave's proposals - on 29 November - was almost entirely negative. At the general level, the Foreign Secretary considered it 'premature' to go any further with plans for a League Conference on naval disarmament because at that stage the Washington Treaty had not been ratified.<sup>22</sup> More specifically, Soviet involvement in any extension of the Washington Treaty could not be considered until the whole question of its relations with the British Government had been resolved.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>FO371/7257: letter from Walker to the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 16 November 1922

<sup>22</sup>FO 371/7257: letter from the FO to the Admiralty, 29 November 1922

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

This Foreign Office caution was wise, particularly in view of the marked differences between Britain and the Soviet Union concerning the resolution of the Turkish crisis. At the end of 1922 and the first half of 1923, however, differences opened up between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office concerning naval disarmament through the League. There are no Admiralty papers which provide for a detailed examination of their motives in supporting this policy but there can be little doubt about the strength of their support. Despite the negative tone of the Foreign Office in its letter of 29 November, just one month later the Admiralty wrote suggesting that the British representative on the Council of the League should press for invitations to be issued for a Conference on extending the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory Powers.<sup>24</sup> The Foreign Office position remained unchanged, Crowe minuting that there should be no question of inviting Powers to such a Conference until the Washington Treaty had been ratified: at this stage neither France nor Italy had ratified the Treaty.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, in a undated memorandum, Balfour, Britain's representative on the League Council, was informed that this was the Government's policy.<sup>26</sup>

The Foreign Office position might have caused Balfour some embarrassment, particularly as the report of the British delegates to the Third League Assembly referred to the decision to call an international Conference as 'the most immediate constructive work of Geneva towards disarmament' - Balfour himself was the head of this five member delegation.<sup>27</sup> At its meeting of 31 January 1923 the Council decided, however, that it would not summon the international Conference until after the close of the Pan-American Conference

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<sup>24</sup>FO371/8480: Admiralty letter to the FO, 30 December 1922

<sup>25</sup>FO371/8480: minute by Crowe, 6 January 1923

<sup>26</sup>FO371/8480: undated FO memorandum for Balfour

<sup>27</sup>League of Nations. Third Assembly. Report of the British Delegates, 1923,  
Cmd.1807 of 1923

which would open on 4 March in Santiago and which was expected to consider the arms question. As regards those States which were not members of the League, the Council decided that it would be best for their inclusion to be left for the Conference itself to determine but the Secretary-General was directed to notify these States that a Conference was to be held in the near future.<sup>28</sup> But this proposed course of action did not go far enough for the TMC which, on 12 February 1923, requested the Council to instruct the PAC to consider extending the scheme to States which were not members of the League. Accordingly a letter was sent to all Council members asking them if they were in agreement with this proposal. By 21 March 1923 the League had received affirmative replies from France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Sweden, Brazil and Spain but not from Britain, China and Uruguay.<sup>29</sup> The nature of Britain's delayed response on this matter revealed differences of opinion within the Foreign Office.

Charles Tufton, a Counsellor, considered that Britain should agree to this League proposal on the ground that any reluctance on its part to do so 'would be difficult to explain, and would certainly be liable to misinterpretation'.<sup>30</sup> In a minute of 9 April, however, Sperling was much less supportive of the scheme:

On its merits it appears a misguided proposal, and our agreement to it will certainly be quoted in future as committing H.M.G. to going into a disarmament conference with Russia, among other Powers.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>FO371/8482: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

<sup>29</sup>FO371/8481: memorandum by Drummond, 21 March 1923

<sup>30</sup>FO371/8482: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

<sup>31</sup>FO371/8482: minute by Sperling, 9 April 1923

Crowe supported Sperling's doubts about the scheme which he considered to be yet another example of the wholly inappropriate influence of the TMC under Cecil's influence.<sup>32</sup> Crowe considered, however, that if Britain's representative on the Council, Edward Wood, President of the Board of Education, found it difficult to object, he should agree but state that the Government 'reserves liberty of action and decision' concerning the conclusions of the PAC.<sup>33</sup> This was the policy which Wood was instructed to pursue and he was also advised as to the most appropriate procedure to follow in order to avoid isolation on the Council. It was suggested that he should speak privately with the French representative before the meeting and win his support for the British view that discussion of the extension of the Washington principles to States outside the League was premature given that the Treaty itself had not yet been ratified.<sup>34</sup> It is rather surprising that the Foreign Office, in producing the memorandum, appears not to have taken account of the fact that, according to Tufton's memorandum, the French Government had already agreed that the PAC should conduct such a discussion.<sup>35</sup>

It transpired at the meeting of the Council in April 1923 that Wood was able to have discussion of the question postponed but not through private discussion with the French representative. Instead he won Italian support by arguing not only that the Washington Treaty had not been ratified but that the Pan-American Conference was still taking place, that the PAC's agenda was so full that it would be virtually impossible for the naval Conference to take place in 1923, that it would not take long for the PAC to discuss the subject and that

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<sup>32</sup>FO371/8482: minute by Crowe, 9 April 1923

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Adm116/2184: FO memorandum, 'Extension of the principles of the Washington Naval Treaty', 14 April 1923

<sup>35</sup>FO371/8482: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

international circumstances might change, especially concerning the Soviet Union, and that these changes might affect discussion within the PAC.<sup>36</sup> Two months later the Foreign Office held that these points should again be used to secure further postponement of the issue at the July session of the Council meeting, despite the fact that the Pan-American Conference had ended without reaching any agreement on arms reduction or limitation.<sup>37</sup> Cecil, who represented Britain at this Council meeting, followed the Foreign Office instructions, but he made it quite clear that he wanted no further delay, urging the Council to declare its intention to take a decision at the next session.<sup>38</sup>

By late August 1923 the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty had been ratified and the Foreign Office had no objection, therefore, to the PAC discussing 'from the purely technical point of view' the conditions to which non-League members should conform if they were to take part in a naval disarmament Conference.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, the Foreign Office still instructed Cecil to make it clear that the British Government 'reserved entire liberty of action and decision as to their attitude towards the conclusions' which might be arrived at by the PAC.<sup>40</sup> Such an approach was clearly greeted with dismay by Cecil at Geneva and he instructed Tufton to write to Tyrrell seeking a change in the Foreign Office position. The basis of Cecil's argument was quite straightforward: in making such a reservation the Government was acting against the unanimously agreed decision of the League Assembly of 1922 to issue

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<sup>36</sup>Adm116/2184: FO memorandum, 'Extension of the principles of the Washington Naval Treaty', 26 June 1923

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Adm116/2184: League of Nations. Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments. Memorandum by the Secretariat, 9 July 1923

<sup>39</sup>Adm116/2184: FO memorandum for Cecil, 'Extension of the principles of the Washington Naval Treaty', 27 August 1923

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

invitations to both League and non-League members.<sup>41</sup> As Tufton himself had previously pointed out when trying to persuade his Foreign Office colleagues to take a more positive and supportive attitude on this issue, the British delegation to the 1922 Assembly had 'pressed acceptance of the resolution strongly'.<sup>42</sup> Cecil was certainly very keen that the proposed Conference should take place and he asserted not only that it was difficult to see how it could harm British interests but also that 'the Admiralty themselves are most anxious for the proposed conference to be held'.<sup>43</sup> These arguments proved sufficiently powerful to prompt a change of view within the Foreign Office because on 11 September, Tyrrell wrote to Cecil informing him that Curzon no longer required him to make the reservation regarding the British position concerning the proposed naval Conference.<sup>44</sup>

The support which Cecil and Tufton gave to the Admiralty's proposal to extend the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory Powers was strongly opposed by Crowe who considered that the entire project was doomed to failure from the outset. Throughout the period from 1918 until his death in 1925, Crowe showed himself to be a trenchant critic of all arms control and limitation initiatives, especially those advanced through the League. In mid-1923 he was intensely critical not only of the proposal to extend the principles of the Washington Treaty but of the Treaty itself:

That agreement does not infact [sic] exist in an operative form. It has never been ratified, and it looks as if it possibly never will be.

At best it deals with a small corner of the naval problem. So far

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<sup>41</sup>Adm116/2184: letter from Tufton to Tyrrell, 30 August 1923

<sup>42</sup>FO371/8481: memorandum by Tufton, 9 April 1923

<sup>43</sup>Adm116/2184: letter from Tufton to Tyrrell, 30 August 1923

<sup>44</sup>Adm116/2184: letter from Tyrrell to Cecil, 11 September 1923

as it has been - prematurely - put into execution by our Admiralty, it has already led us into serious difficulties. Any extension of it will undoubtedly give rise to more. Like all plans of so-called disarmament, it is far from satisfactory.<sup>45</sup>

Crowe was, of course, wrong as regards ratification of the Washington Treaty, but his criticism of the Admiralty is striking. Crowe questioned whether the Washington Treaty would have been negotiated had it not been for Britain's desire to save money and 'a suspicion that capital ships might prove to be, under conditions of modern warfare, a bad investment'.<sup>46</sup>

The British Government was undoubtedly concerned about the cost of maintaining its naval position but Crowe's observation about the value of capital ships was strikingly at odds with Roskill's assessment of the Washington Treaty. Roskill asserted that, despite developments in air power, 'British and American official naval opinion was however firmly wedded to the belief that the capital ship was still the backbone of the fleet and the basis of seapower; but in both countries there was a strong desire to press ahead with the development of aircraft carriers - even though their aircraft were still regarded only as auxiliaries to the big guns of the capital ships.'<sup>47</sup> The Admiralty's backing for an extension of the principles of the Washington Treaty appeared to give support to Roskill's assessment: it was because they continued to attach importance to capital ships that they wished to extend control of this class beyond the Washington Powers and they considered that the best way of so doing was through a disarmament process under the auspices of the League. Although there was clearly more to

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<sup>45</sup>FO800/243: memorandum by Crowe, 24 June 1923

<sup>46</sup>FO800/243 : 'Note on Lord R.Cecil's Scheme of Guarantee Treaties and Disarmament' by Crowe, 25 June 1923

<sup>47</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, p.322



naval arms limitation than the question of capital ships, they were important and Cecil was surely right to argue that Britain's interests could not be harmed by supporting such a process. There is no intention in this chapter to argue that the process could have been successful but the lukewarm Foreign Office response was an attempt to close the door too early and for no good reason. Crowe perceived a dangerous world in which it was inappropriate for Britain to continue its advocacy of disarmament :

It is not good policy to take part in advocating measures which are not likely to be found workable or to meet with acceptance. Such an attitude only tends to inspire mistrust and evoke suspicions of the promoters being moved by selfish interest. The wiser policy is to allow matters to develop on the natural lines of progress; to devote thought and energy to the solution by peaceful means of particular difficulties as they arise instead of dogmatising on universal panaceas; to endeavour, gradually, by fair dealing, by the creation of useful precedents, by the formation of international habits, to build up a general feeling of reliance on pacific methods to ensure that in the settlement of differences which inevitably arise between States, justice rules and right prevails.<sup>48</sup>

It can be argued that, in pressing for the most wide-ranging discussion of the extension of the principles which governed the Washington Treaty, men such as Cecil, Segrave and Tufton were seeking to establish just these useful precedents

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<sup>48</sup>FO800/243: 'Note on Lord R.Cecil's Scheme of Guarantee Treaties and Disarmament' by Crowe, 25 June 1923

and international habits; but this policy received little support from senior decision-makers within the Foreign Office.

Curzon's decision in September 1923 to remove the reservation regarding a possible international Conference on naval disarmament meant that Cecil was able to support positive resolutions on this issue at the Council meeting of 20 September. The PAC was instructed to consider the question of extending the scheme to non-League members and to reconsider the draft Convention 'with a view to its universal acceptance from a naval technical point of view'.<sup>49</sup> In recommending reconsideration, the President of the Council, Antonio Salandra, was taking due account of the Brazilian and Spanish opposition which had been voiced previously in the PAC. He held that it was important for the success of the international Conference that the draft Convention, which was to be the basis of discussion, should command the widest possible support from naval experts.<sup>50</sup>

The initial opposition to the draft Convention of the Spanish and Brazilian representatives on the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC was a powerful reason for the Council to proceed to organize the full Conference rather than inserting a second round of technical discussion involving more naval experts. The Council decided, however, on just such a second round of technical discussion and in October the Secretary-General of the League informed the Foreign Office that the PAC had decided to hold a meeting for this purpose on 21 January 1924.<sup>51</sup> This meeting was threatened by the assassination in Switzerland of Vorovsky, joint head, with Foreign Minister Chicherin, of the

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<sup>49</sup>Adm116/2184: Report to the Council of the League of Nations by Salandra, 17 September 1923

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Adm116/2184: letter from Drummond to the FO, October 1923

Soviet delegation to the Lausanne Conference.<sup>52</sup> The Soviet Union declared that it would only attend the PAC meeting if it were not held in Switzerland. This was of considerable concern to Cecil because he considered that the attendance of the Soviet Union was crucial to the success of the meeting but he did not want the Swiss Government to be offended.<sup>53</sup> Both London and Paris were suggested as possible alternatives but circumstances resulted in Rome being the new venue. This was because the Italian member of the Naval Sub-Commission, Admiral Acton, had recently been made Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Navy and his appointment would make it difficult for him to be away from Rome. As neither the Foreign Office nor the Admiralty had any objections to meeting in Rome, it was decided that the Conference of the Naval Sub-Commission should take place there no earlier than 14 and no later than 29 February 1924.<sup>54</sup> The delegates assembled on 14 February and their discussions were presided over by the Swedish representative, Admiral de Riben, and were held in private.<sup>55</sup>

In certain respects the Rome Naval Conference was a rather strange gathering. First, although its purpose was focused on naval disarmament amongst those Powers which had not signed the Washington Treaty, the draft Convention on which it was based was the work of those League Powers which were signatories to this Treaty. Second, while the draft Convention which had been produced by the PAC did not envisage the inclusion of Britain, France, Italy and Japan, as members of the PAC these Powers were clearly entitled to be present and to vote on any proposals put before the Conference. Third, it was required to confine its work to technical naval issues yet, as one contemporary

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<sup>52</sup>Northedge, *The Troubled Giant*, pp.206-207

<sup>53</sup>Adm116/2184: telegram from Cecil to the FO, 18 December 1923

<sup>54</sup>FO371/9597: letter from Drummond to the FO, 10 January 1924

<sup>55</sup>FO371/9597: letter from the British Embassy in Rome to the FO, 15 February 1924

appreciation of the Conference has observed, 'the Commission had before it matters which were not only naval but political, each inseparable from the other, and the dividing line of which is as incapable of definition as the stage at which a kitten becomes a cat'.<sup>56</sup> It was these political questions which ultimately stood in the way of general agreement at Rome and would have to be resolved before a treaty extending the principles of the Washington Treaty won general approval from non-signatory Powers possessing capital ships.

One difficulty was the inadequate representation of the Powers. In this respect the Turkish Government failed even to reply to the invitation to attend the Conference - although, as the Treaty of Lausanne had not as yet been ratified, it was still technically at war with the Allied and Associated Powers. In addition, the Argentinian and Uruguayan representatives stated at the outset of the Conference that their Governments had instructed them not to take part in the discussions although they remained in attendance as observers. The most important difficulty, however, identified by Eduard Benes in a report to the Council, was the continuing division between those Powers which wanted simply to extend the two principles of the Washington Treaty, namely, laying down the tonnage of capital ships on the basis of the status quo and establishing a holiday in capital ship construction, and those which wanted naval limitation to be based on Article 8 of the Covenant which would mean determining the size of each State's Navy according to an assessment of its national security needs.<sup>57</sup> The latter approach inevitably meant that the Conference would be unable to remain within its terms of reference and limit its discussions to the technical aspects of naval disarmament. Instead it would stray into political matters which

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<sup>56</sup>NBKR 4X/68 : 'An Appreciation of the Rome Naval Meeting' , undated memorandum, signature illegible

<sup>57</sup>FO411/1: Report to the Council of the League by Benes, June 1924

the representatives were not competent to determine. This was most marked in the case of the Soviet Union's representative, Eugene Berens, who, 'while an expert, was also in some ways a plenipotentiary, as he put forward proposals some of which were purely political, and was evidently in direct consultation with his Government during the sittings'.<sup>58</sup> It applied also, though, to several other Powers and contributed to reserves being made by seven Powers as regards the draft Convention.

The draft Convention initially drawn up by the PAC had laid down as the criterion for future limitation of capital ship building the status quo as at 12 November 1921. At Rome, however, only Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway were prepared unequivocally to agree to this principle. In contrast, the representatives of Brazil, Spain and the Soviet Union sought to create a situation whereby each State would be able to fix its own tonnage guided by an assessment of its own defence requirements. They even suggested that the attempt to reach an agreed criterion should be dropped and that the capital ship tonnage required by each State should be put into the draft Convention. As was pointed out, however, 'if such a proposal were agreed to it meant that the meeting was entirely objectless [sic], and that the result might much more economically have been achieved by each Power informing Geneva by letter of its tonnage requirements'.<sup>59</sup>

In practice, the representatives were forced by the lack of an agreed criterion to consider and vote upon the tonnage demands put forward by each State. Accordingly, the Soviet representative, Berens, put forward a total capital ship tonnage for his country of 490,000 tons, vastly in excess of the 175,000

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<sup>58</sup>NBKR 4X/68: 'An Appreciation of the Rome Naval Meeting', undated memorandum, signature illegible

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

tons suggested by Segrave in his proposal by which it would become a party to the Washington Treaty. Berens argued that, because its capital ship tonnage at the time of the Conference was 340,538 tons, the Soviet Union should have the right to lay down new construction. Politically, however, the demand was unacceptable because it would establish the Soviet Fleet as the third most powerful in the world; thus it was rejected by six votes to four - the four Washington Powers together with Brazil and Sweden voting against - with five countries abstaining.<sup>60</sup>

Berens then put forward the much reduced figure of 280,000 tons for the Soviet Union but this was dependent on five political conditions, notably that the implementation and supervision of the Convention should be supervised by some organization other than the League, that the Bosphorous and Dardanelles were closed to warships and that the Korean Straits were demilitarized.<sup>61</sup> These demands went so far beyond the specifically technical competence of the Conference that the delegates unanimously agreed that they could not consider them.<sup>62</sup> The demands also went far beyond what was politically achievable. The agreement concerning the Dardanelles made at Lausanne the previous year meant that there was no prospect of this Soviet condition being met and its continued opposition to the League was unacceptable to the other Powers represented at the Rome Conference.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>NBKR 4X/68: 'League of Nations. Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions. Extension to Non-Signatory States of the Principles of Washington for the Limitation of Naval Armaments. Report to the Council', 29 February 1924

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Dockrill, M.L. and Goold, J.D. Peace without Promise - Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23 (London: Batsford, 1981), pp.238-239

The Soviet Union was not the only State whose naval demands presented difficulties. Although the Spanish won agreement for 105,000 tons of capital ships, its demand to be allowed new construction in 1927, 1929 and 1931 so that it could build up to this figure from the 81,072 tons it possessed at the time of the Conference, was rejected. Spain's demand for this new construction meant that it was not, in practice, prepared to accept the principle of a naval holiday, a fact which the Belgian, Czech and Japanese representatives stated they had not realized when voting in favour of the figure of 105,000 tons. As a result of these votes, Spain's representative declared that it would accept no limitations on its Navy other than those compatible with Article 8 of the Covenant. At the close of the Conference, however, the Spanish position was modified. In a note in defence of his country's position the Spanish representative declared that Spain had been prepared, without reservation, to limit its Navy to 105,000 tons and that it would accept a temporary limit of 82,000 tons if the other riparian Powers of the Western Mediterranean were prepared to do likewise.<sup>64</sup>

The Spanish representative's reference to his country's willingness to accept the higher tonnage limit 'without reservation' was intended to place it in a favourable light compared with several other Powers. Brazil and Chile, for example, were only prepared to accept a limit of 80,000 tons of capital ships if Argentina did the same, while Greece made its acceptance of 36,000 tons conditional upon Turkey agreeing to the same tonnage and retaining the three capital ships which it - Turkey - then possessed. In addition, Sweden accepted 60,000 tons only as long as the other riparian States of the Baltic agreed not to

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<sup>64</sup>NBKR 4X/68: 'League of Nations. Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions. Extension to Non-Signatory States of the Principles of Washington for the Limitation of Naval Armaments. Report to the Council', 29 February 1924

exceed the same tonnage in the Baltic and Arctic Seas.<sup>65</sup> These reservations reveal the quite specific regional concerns which influenced these Powers. Brazil and Chile were markedly inferior to Argentina in capital ship strength but they wished to assert their right to equality. In the Balkans the Greeks were focused on the threat posed by Turkish nationalism and the Swedes recognized the much greater presence in the Baltic of the Soviet Fleet.

On the surface, the number of votes taken on tonnage to be allocated to the Powers and on the exceptions to the application of a naval holiday until 1931, together with the non-attendance of Turkey, the non-involvement of Argentina and Uruguay and the unrealistic demands of the Soviet Union, appear to justify the discussions at Rome being described as a Conference which 'bordered on farce'.<sup>66</sup> If this were the case, however, consideration of the issue would not have continued within both the Admiralty and the Foreign Office in the months between the end of the Conference and the Fifth League Assembly in September 1924. In particular, it should be emphasized that the Rome Conference was a technical gathering, not a Conference where the representatives carried plenipotentiary powers to make political decisions. It was a gathering which could be - and was - used, by all Powers, to gain an insight into the policies and projected demands of other Powers, more especially potential enemies and rivals.

In this context it is perhaps surprising that historians have ignored the altogether more sanguine judgements of some well-informed contemporaries, and in particular those whose critical gaze was not distorted by lenses coloured in favour of League disarmament initiatives. For example, on 4 March 1924

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid. and NBKR 4X/68 : 'An Appreciation of the Rome Naval Meeting' , undated memorandum, signature illegible

<sup>66</sup>Towle, op.cit., p.136



Britain's new representative on the Naval Sub-Commission of the PAC, Rear Admiral Aubrey Smith, provided a rather optimistic assessment of the proceedings.<sup>67</sup> He considered that the discussions had been held in a friendly atmosphere and that it was apparent that 'the majority of the countries represented did not desire and, in fact, could not afford to build any capital ships, but their national pride (in the case of the South American States a very powerful factor) would not allow their representatives to subscribe to any conditions which imposed this limitation'.<sup>68</sup> Aubrey Smith did not consider this to be an obstacle to further progress on the issue and he thought there was a real possibility of being able to hold a full international Conference as had been originally intended. He recognized, however, that Turkey would have to be persuaded to attend such a Conference and that pressure would have to be placed on the Soviet Union so that it would 'accept a maximum tonnage which will admit of the countries bordering on the Black Sea and Baltic removing their reserves'.<sup>69</sup> It is, of course, the case that none of this happened and, therefore, it is easy to criticize Aubrey Smith for excessive sanguinity. Yet within the Admiralty, Aubrey Smith's position received some influential support from Captain Dudley Pound, Director of the Plans Division, who was undismayed by the failure to reach any agreement at Rome. He had not expected agreement<sup>70</sup> and so, in his view, 'this failure to agree is consequently not considered necessarily to prejudice the success of a diplomatic conference if one is held later, nor to make the holding of such a conference impracticable'.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>FO411/1: report by Aubrey Smith, 4 March 1924

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Adm11/2184: minute by Pound, 11 October 1923

<sup>71</sup>Adm116/2185: minute by Pound, 25 March 1924

At this stage, the path from Rome to a full diplomatic Conference was not clear. The purpose of the Rome Conference had been to reconsider the draft Convention drawn up in 1922 with a view to its unanimous acceptance from a technical point of view so that it could then form the basis of a full international naval disarmament Conference. The failure to reach agreement at Rome did not prevent the convening of a second technical Conference, a further meeting of the Naval Sub-Commission supplemented by representatives of Powers from outside the League which possessed capital ships. Indeed, on 14 March the Council decided to send all States a copy of the report of the Rome Naval Conference and ask their opinion as to whether a second technical conference should in fact be held.<sup>72</sup> The Admiralty and the Foreign Office were in full agreement that this was inappropriate so there was no delay in responding with a firm rejection of a second technical meeting.<sup>73</sup>

On 16 June the Council decided to place the matter of extending the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory Powers before the Fifth Assembly of the League to enable it 'to define the essential principles on which a general conference on the limitation of naval armaments might be based'.<sup>74</sup> This Council decision led to discussion within the Admiralty as to how best to approach this issue at the forthcoming League Assembly. Rear Admiral Maurice Fitzmaurice, Director of Naval Intelligence, argued in favour of abandoning the status quo as a principle on which the naval armaments of the lesser Powers might be based and instead fixing the size of their Fleets 'strictly in accordance with what is necessary for their naval security'.<sup>75</sup> Doubtless drawing on his

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<sup>72</sup>FO371/9597: extract from the 8th meeting of the 28th session of the Council of the League of Nations, 14 March 1924

<sup>73</sup>FO371/9598: letter from Cadogan to Drummond, 11 April 1924

<sup>74</sup>FO411/1: letter from Drummond to the FO, 25 June 1924

<sup>75</sup>Adm116/2185: minute by Fitzmaurice, 3 July 1924

experience of the Rome Naval Conference, Aubrey Smith rejected this suggestion on the ground that it 'will provoke endless discussion, probably lead to claims to increase armaments, and further, some of the Powers signatories to the Washington Treaty may protest that their position has been compromised'.<sup>76</sup> Aubrey Smith was acutely aware that it was not only those Powers with capital ships which were interested in the issue and that any attempt to base naval strength on national security would make it difficult to exclude lesser naval Powers from the discussions. The Roumanian Government had previously argued that its interest in the Black Sea meant that it should have been invited to participate in the Rome Conference and the Belgian representative, who did attend the Conference in his capacity as a PAC member, despite his country possessing no capital ships, introduced a reservation to the effect that it wished to acquire four monitor class ships which would be less than 10,000 tons but which would carry guns in excess of 8 inches but less than 16 inches.<sup>77</sup>

In his report on the Rome Conference, Aubrey Smith had urged caution about holding a second such Conference as it was possible that 'the result will be the creation of more navies, and we thus arrive at a paradox, the conference to limit naval armaments results in an increase in navies'.<sup>78</sup> This careful approach emerged as Admiralty policy and in late July a letter from Alex Flint to the Foreign Office stated its opposition 'to the elaboration of any statistical or other scheme which will purport to take account of the necessities of the naval security of each State' on the simple ground that it would not be possible to

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<sup>76</sup>Adm116/2185: minute by Aubrey Smith, 4 July 1924

<sup>77</sup>NBKR 4X/68: 'League of Nations. Naval Sub-Commission of the Permanent States Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions. Extension to Non-Signatory States of the Principles of Washington for the Limitation of Naval Armaments. Report to the Council', 29 February 1924

<sup>78</sup>FO411/1: report by Aubrey Smith, 4 March 1924

achieve.<sup>79</sup> Instead the Admiralty held to its policy of the status quo and a naval holiday. At the same time, the Admiralty insisted that these principles had to be applied flexibly so that where adjustments to the status quo were necessary - in Latin America, for example, where it was clear that equality between Argentina, Brazil and Chile would have to be established - exceptions could be made.<sup>80</sup>

By the summer of 1924, the enthusiasm of the Admiralty for the scheme which Segrave had put forward some two and half years before was cooling. Henceforward, their preferred option was 'to avoid any definition of principles, since agreement is likely to be very difficult'<sup>81</sup> and this Admiralty advice was incorporated within the memorandum prepared by the Foreign Office for Britain's delegate to the Fifth League Assembly, Lord Parmoor, but at this stage the situation was changing rapidly both in London and Geneva. In London, the policy of the new Labour Government towards naval disarmament had not yet been worked out, and the lines of communication between MacDonald, Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, and officials within the Foreign Office were anything but clear. At Geneva, although the Assembly had been requested by the Council to set out the principles on which an international Conference for naval arms limitation might be based, in other words, to do what the Rome Conference had failed to do, there was considerable doubt as to whether this could be achieved, with the result that the League apparently began to seek a new basis for a Conference, which was to be one not merely for the extension of the principles of the Washington Treaty but 'a general conference on naval armament'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Adm116/2185: letter from Flint to the FO, 25 July 1924

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>FO371/9598: undated, unsigned minute from the American Department

The situation was further complicated by indications that further initiatives towards general disarmament were expected from the US Government and even from MacDonald himself. Officials within the American Department were expecting the British Prime Minister to make a broad-ranging statement about disarmament although, on 27 August, Ronald Ion Campbell wrote that 'On another paper the Prime Minister has said that it is not his intention to do so'.<sup>83</sup> In this changed situation, the American Department thought it would be better if the League dropped the matter of naval disarmament as a separate concern, so that it could be incorporated into discussion of the whole question of disarmament either at a Conference which it was thought the US Government intended to call, or as a result of an initiative at Geneva. Although little could be expected from the US Government, Tyrrell expected that Calvin Coolidge would be elected as President and he - Tyrrell - wanted 'to avoid any scheme which would make [American] participation more difficult or impossible'.<sup>84</sup> In this respect, any further League initiative on the lines discussed at the Rome Conference would cause very serious problems with the USA, unless the Soviet Union was excluded. This was primarily because the USA did not recognize the Soviet Union and thus would not consider inviting the Soviet Union to sign a protocol to the Washington Treaty.<sup>85</sup> The only way out of the impasse appeared to be a new initiative whose appearance was expected but whose shape was then unknown. This is, in fact, what happened, although it would be almost two years - 18 May 1926 to be precise - before the League's Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference convened in Geneva.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>FO371/9598: minute by Campbell, 27 August 1924

<sup>84</sup>FO371/9598: minute by Tyrrell, 21 August 1924

<sup>85</sup>Adm116/2185: minute by Flint, 8 March 1924

<sup>86</sup>For an analysis of the origins of the Preparatory Commission see Richardson, *op.cit.*, pp.29-57

In assessing the Rome Conference, Roskill has made the error of describing it as the international Conference which the Third League Assembly in 1922 wished to summon so as to achieve a treaty by which the principles of the Washington Treaty could be extended to the non-signatory Powers.<sup>87</sup> It was actually a preparatory meeting which was intended to provide a basis for such a Conference. As such it failed and ultimately the responsibility for this failure must rest with the decision of the TMC to include those Powers which stood outside the League. If the TMC had been prepared, in the first instance, to seek agreement only between those League Powers which were not signatories to the Washington Treaty but which did possess capital ships, the outcome of the Conference might have been different. Three of these States - Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands - were willing to accept the status quo and the principle of the naval holiday in capital ship building. There was also 'the germ of an agreement between the three South American states', Argentina, Brazil and Chile.<sup>88</sup> If these six Powers had been prepared to sign a Convention based on the draft drawn up by the PAC in July 1922, disarmament, as understood in this thesis, would have been stimulated and the authority of the League strengthened. The TMC's determination, however, to include the Soviet Union in the discussions at Rome, despite its refusal to recognize the League, resulted in the discussions being dominated by its extreme demands. Having decided to extend the proposed naval Convention to non-League powers it would not be an easy task to exclude the Soviet Union from the process but there was clearly no prospect of it accepting a settlement based on the Washington principles. It is deeply ironic that this initiative, which might have stimulated disarmament, was

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<sup>87</sup>Roskill, *op.cit.*, pp.426-427

<sup>88</sup>NBKR 4X/68: 'An Appreciation of the Rome Naval Meeting', undated memorandum, signature illegible

put forward and supported for so long by the Admiralty and yet ultimately pushed beyond any prospect of realization by the more determined advocates of disarmament at Geneva, including Cecil.

## Chapter 7 - The Problem of Land and Air Disarmament:

In 1922 the TMC was galvanized into action not only by the work of Admiral Segrave but also by that of two new British members, Viscount Esher and Lord Robert Cecil, who put forward initiatives for land and air disarmament. Although the Great War had seen a very extensive development of air power and the emergence of separate Government departments for its organization, there continued to be close co-operation between air and land forces. In the early 1920s it was argued, therefore, that 'air forces must be considered as an integral part of the land armies, and agreements as to the reduction of land armaments must also cover the air services, which are organised in connection with these armies'.<sup>1</sup> This analysis underpinned the Esher and Cecil proposals which, like the scheme to extend the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty to non-signatory Powers, constituted what Salvador de Madariaga, Director of the Disarmament Section at the League of Nations from 1922-27, has referred to as 'the direct or technical method' of achieving disarmament.<sup>2</sup> This stems from the conviction that arms races cause wars and that it was logical, therefore, to seek to discover technical means by which disarmament might be achieved so as to reduce the likelihood of the outbreak of war. Opposed to this is the indirect method of achieving disarmament which starts from the assumption that the threat of war causes arms races and argues that the correct approach is to seek solutions to the political problems which lead to wars.<sup>3</sup> It is significant that at the same time as he proposed a direct method of achieving land and air disarmament, Cecil also put forward a different scheme, the draft Treaty of

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<sup>1</sup>CTA140: 'Note on relation of air warfare to the reduction of land armaments', unsigned, 24 July 1924

<sup>2</sup>Madariaga, Disarmament, p.97

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp.97-98



Mutual Guarantee (TMG), which attempted to combine the direct and indirect methods to achieve general disarmament. The importance attached to the TMG resulted in the Esher plan being dropped and Cecil's initiative regarding land and air disarmament being pushed into the background. This was unfortunate for the cause of disarmament as a combination of the Esher plan and Cecil's proposals for the limitation of land and air arms offered a genuine prospect of progress.

The treatment of Esher's proposal by both contemporaries and historians is of considerable interest. Segrave's scheme for the extension of the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory Powers has largely been ignored by historians, as was shown in the previous chapter, even though it was still being discussed within the League as late as 1924. By contrast, Esher's land disarmament scheme received very little support within the League or from leading British decision-makers and by autumn 1922 it had been superseded by Cecil's proposal for a TMG. Yet, despite its short life, it has been treated by historians as a serious element in the attempt to achieve disarmament through the League of Nations. In her study of international disarmament Kitching has given some attention to possible explanations for the failure of the Esher plan.<sup>4</sup> Madariaga asserted that it was rejected because it dealt only with land forces and the French and Italians were not prepared to separate land and naval disarmament.<sup>5</sup> Kitching was rightly unconvinced by this argument because, only a few weeks before Esher put forward his initiative, the French and Italians dealt separately with naval armaments at the Washington Conference.<sup>6</sup> Instead she followed Esher's two biographers in accepting the veracity of Esher's own explanation, contained in a letter written to MacDonald in August 1924: he

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<sup>4</sup>Kitching, *op.cit.*, p.63

<sup>5</sup>Madariaga, *Disarmament*, p.103

<sup>6</sup>Kitching, *op.cit.*, p.63

withdrew his plan because Cecil was so determined to press ahead with the TMG.<sup>7</sup>

More important than these considerations of why the plan failed is Towle's assessment of its wider significance. Although he considered that its acceptance could only have been temporary because it placed the German Army in a position of inferiority measured against that of France, he believed that it could have had a beneficial effect on relations within Europe:

Nevertheless, acceptance of the Esher plan might, for a few years, have turned attention away from the vexed question of the correlation of forces in Europe. The Esher proposal was the most realistic British paper on land disarmament in the inter-war years. Nor is that very surprising ; Esher was the only British strategist of such distinction who applied his mind to the problem at the League. He knew what was possible and what was advantageous. But the moment, if it ever existed, was lost.<sup>8</sup>

Towle asserted that the plan failed because the other TMC members were 'either too limited or contrary' to see its advantages.<sup>9</sup> There is much truth in this judgement but it is not entirely satisfactory because it fails to offer a reasoned consideration of the TMC's reaction to the Esher plan, it takes no account of the opinions expressed within the League Council and the PAC or by the decision-makers of the principal League Powers and it ignores the possibility of linking

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<sup>7</sup>Fraser, P. Lord Esher. A Political Biography (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973), pp.402-403; Lees-Milne, J. The Life of Reginald 2nd Viscount Esher. The Enigmatic Victorian (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986), p.336

<sup>8</sup>Towle, op.cit., p.135

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p.133

the Esher plan with Cecil's proposals for land and air disarmament. Richardson was right, therefore, to point out that there has been no full-scale analysis of the plan.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to put this omission right.

The period from the end of the Great War to early 1922 offered little hope of progress for those committed to land and air disarmament as understood in this thesis. In December 1918 Cecil, commenting on General Smuts' famous memorandum concerning the forthcoming Peace Conference, stated that the establishment of quotas of soldiers would, for ten years at least, be 'perfectly illusory' because during this period 'every great nation will have several million trained soldiers whom they can summon at a moment's notice.'<sup>11</sup> He was equally unconvinced by the idea of quotas of equipment because of the changes which had taken place in the nature of warfare:

The really important weapons in the next war will be aeroplanes, steel foundries, and chemical works. All these have peaceful, as well as warlike uses. It would be very difficult to control the degree to which governments rendered them adaptable in advance to war purposes.<sup>12</sup>

These views were, of course, expressed before the establishment of the League but Cecil's caution was justified by the absence of any significant developments during the First League Assembly in 1920. From the point of view of disarmament all that emerged from this First Assembly was the recommendation

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<sup>10</sup>Richardson, D. A History of Disarmament and Arms Control (London: Routledge, awaiting publication), p.192

<sup>11</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51076, notes dated 24 December 1918, commenting on a memorandum by Smuts; FO371/4353: memorandum by Smuts, 'The League of Nations. A Programme for the Peace Conference', 16 December 1918

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

that Governments should give an undertaking not to exceed for the first two financial years following the financial year 1921-22, the sum total of expenditure on the Fighting Services provided for in their budgets for 1921-22. This was, in effect, an attempt to move League members towards arms limitation based on budgetary means, taking the financial year 1921-22 as the status quo. Hankey's draft reply stated that the British Government supported the principle of the League's recommendation, that it had already effected considerable reductions in its military expenditure and that it anticipated further economies during the next two years. Further economies would, however, have to be subject to reservations regarding expenditure incurred under Articles 8 and 16 of the Covenant of the League, those dealing with national security and League imposed sanctions respectively. On 11 May 1921 the Cabinet approved this reply on the understanding that it 'did not prejudice the liberty of the Government to make such provision for Imperial defence as might be essential to our security in the unsettled conditions now prevailing'.<sup>13</sup> For those who sought disarmament through the League this response was, for all practical purposes, meaningless. The British Government had reduced expenditure on armaments but in so doing it was concerned with domestic economic and financial considerations and not with a desire to encourage disarmament through the League. As far as the General Staff was concerned, this process of military arms reduction had, by October 1921, already gone as far as it could without endangering the security of the British Empire.<sup>14</sup> The British approach to land disarmament was at this stage clearly a combination of the cautious and the unenthusiastic.

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<sup>13</sup>Cab23/25: Cabinet conclusions, 11 May 1921

<sup>14</sup>Cab4/7: CID memorandum 276-B, 5 October 1921

A formidable range of technical arguments had also been developed against air disarmament. The most significant statement of these arguments was set out in the report of the Committee on Aircraft at the Washington Conference in December 1921.<sup>15</sup> This Committee was made up of officers from Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the US under the chairmanship of Rear Admiral William Moffett of the US Navy. A key element of discussions in the early 1920s regarding limitation of air armaments was civil aviation. The difficulty was that, with aircraft still in the early stages of their development, there was very little difference between commercial and military aircraft. The Committee believed that, over time, developments in commercial and military aircraft would diverge so that it became increasingly difficult to convert civil aircraft for military purposes.<sup>16</sup> That stage had not been reached though and this meant that both the machinery and the personnel of commercial aircraft could then easily be adapted to military purposes. It followed, therefore, that if there were to be an effective limitation of military aircraft, there would have to be some limitation of commercial aircraft too. This, though, was impractical because it would limit the development of a new means of transport and communication which was likely to be of increasing benefit both socially and economically. Owing to this, the Committee concluded that limitation on commercial aircraft would be disastrous.<sup>17</sup> The only exception to this was the commercial use of lighter-than-aircraft or airships because with these there was a strong correlation between their size and efficiency. To be effective militarily airships would have to be capable of carrying a significant load at reasonable heights and considerable speed. Only large airships would be able to do this and their size, like that of

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<sup>15</sup>Air5/590/S22926: Report on Limitation of Aircraft as to Numbers, Character and Use, December 1921

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

warships, meant that their construction could not be kept secret. It would be possible, therefore, to limit such airships by size and to ensure that the limitation was adhered to. The problem which the Committee identified was the obvious one: limitation by size would also affect the commercial use of such airships because they became increasingly efficient the greater their size.<sup>18</sup>

As regards military aircraft the Committee considered that there were five methods which might be employed to ensure the limitation of those which were heavier-than-air. These methods were limitation by number, amount of horsepower, lift tonnage, personnel and budget: for each method the Committee set out what appeared to be conclusive objections. A major difficulty in seeking limitation by numbers was that the status quo could not be taken as the basis because different States were at very different stages in the development of their air forces. Further, air forces were influenced by the size of a nation's land and sea forces because aircraft largely operated as auxiliaries to these forces. The nature of a nation's defence policy could also affect its air force. As examples of this, the Committee suggested that some States would wish to have large air forces for coastal defence whereas others would use their armies and navies for this purpose. Some States were substituting air forces for other forms of defence. This was particularly so in the case of Britain which was developing air power for controlling its tribal subjects. Although the Committee did not mention Britain, it did point out that aircraft were being used in this way and that the size of the air force required would be influenced by the size and nature of the territories to be patrolled. The number of aircraft which a nation chose to maintain would also be influenced by its geographic location and the proximity and strength of its enemies. Even if numbers could be limited, which the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Committee thought impossible because it could not see a method by which an appropriate ratio could be found, this would be insufficient unless the character of aircraft was also limited. Without limitation of character, States would compete not in numbers but in the size and power of their military aircraft.<sup>19</sup>

The Committee held that any attempt to limit horsepower was doomed to failure, whether it was focused on the total horsepower in assembled planes or assembled engines or on the horsepower in a single individual plane of a particular type. This was because such limitation could only be based on the cubic capacity of the engines and they feared that a nation would secretly develop a means by which greater horsepower could be achieved from an engine of limited cubic capacity. A further problem was that even if limitation by horsepower could be agreed, it would require such a stringent inspection system that no Power would be likely to submit to it. The difficulty with lift tonnage was very similar in that the Committee thought that a nation might be able secretly to develop a wing shape which offered extreme lifting efficiency. Any attempt to limit personnel would fail because States organized them differently, some having separate air forces while others incorporated their air forces in the military and naval forces. In addition, there were differences in terms of service - long or short term service, voluntary or conscript - which affected the efficiency of the air forces and both the size and the efficiency of the reserve forces. Budgetary limitation would also fail, so the Committee argued, because there were so many different methods of distributing budgets under different sub-headings that determining and comparing the sums which were spent on the development of air power would be impossible.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Despite these technical arguments against air disarmament and the generally cautious approach of the British Government, the prospects for land and air disarmament were not entirely negative. On 25 February 1921 the Council of the League had authorized the establishment of the TMC, six of whose members were to be chosen from the PAC. The PAC decided on 1 March that its six members should be from Brazil, Britain, Spain, France, Italy and Japan. In response to these League decisions, at a Cabinet meeting on 29 April, it was determined that Britain should be represented on the TMC by a naval officer with a military and air deputy. Accordingly, on 3 May the Admiralty appointed Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe as Britain's representative with Colonel G.S. Clive and Group Captain Percy Groves his military and air deputies.<sup>21</sup> The TMC, however, also contained six civilians, one of whom was H.A.L. Fisher: at this time Britain only had one representative on the TMC. The TMC held its first meetings on 16 and 17 July 1921 following which Group Captain Groves wrote to the Air Ministry enclosing a copy of the minutes of the TMC meeting.<sup>22</sup> It has already been seen that considerable opposition developed within the Foreign Office to the activities of the TMC on the ground that it comprised members who were not responsible to their respective Governments: Crowe frequently inveighed against Cecil's activities on the TMC for just this reason. Groves, though, considered Fisher's remarks at this first session of the TMC to be of interest because they were indicative of the Government's views. Although Fisher declared that he was not speaking as a member of the British Government, Groves' assessment is surely correct given that Fisher was a member of the Cabinet. The striking feature of Fisher's contribution to the

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<sup>21</sup> Air5/559: undated and unsigned note concerning the resolutions adopted by the Council of the League on 25 February 1921

<sup>22</sup> Air5/559: letter from Groves to Steel, the Director of Operations and Intelligence at the Air Ministry, 27 July 1921



TMC's discussions is that he argued in favour of land and naval arms limitation being dealt with separately and he put forward the view that budgetary limitation of land armaments might be possible and that it merited further investigation. As far as naval arms limitation was concerned, he thought that the way forward lay through comparison of capital ships.<sup>23</sup> Fisher's assessment was proved highly perceptive by the fact that within a few months agreement was reached at Washington to limit naval arms by just such comparison, and that at the League an attempt was made to achieve land disarmament by employing budgetary limitation as one of the methods.

This was Fisher's only significant contribution to the work of the TMC but he played a crucial role in securing the appointment of Esher as his replacement on the Commission. In December 1921 he wrote to Esher, at Lloyd George's request, inviting him to serve on the TMC.<sup>24</sup> Fisher had been the British representative but he had recently been compelled to resign by pressure of work. His letter made it clear that the Government wanted Esher to serve on the TMC because it was thought that his expertise in defence matters might result in a scheme for arms reduction which would win French acceptance. Initially Esher was not enthusiastic about taking on this task because on 21 December 1921 he had dinner with Aristide Briand, the French Prime Minister, whose attitude was not very encouraging. This prompted Esher to reply to Fisher setting out the conditions which he considered necessary on the British side if he were to be able to play a positive role:

Unless the P.M. feels strongly about the whole question: unless a vigorous attempt is to be made to come to grips with the two

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Esher papers: letter from Fisher to Esher, 17 December 1921

questions of Disarmament on land, and the limitation of private Armament production, I fear the whole discussion will range interminably up and down academic avenues.<sup>25</sup>

Despite his obvious doubts and his dislike of the President of the TMC, René Viviani, whom he described as 'a vain swollen headed fellow', Esher was prepared to join the TMC and he rapidly put forward a plan which 'cut through the verbiage of previous discussions'.<sup>26</sup>

When he joined the TMC, Esher was nearly seventy years old and his career had provided him with extensive and relevant experience for service on the TMC. For five years from 1880 he had been the Liberal MP for the constituency of Penryn and Falmouth, in 1903 he was chairman of the Prime Minister's committee on the War Office and in 1905 he was appointed a permanent member of the CID. By the early 1920s Esher was very concerned about the poor relations between Britain and France and his principal purpose in accepting Fisher's invitation was the conviction that he might be able to do something to improve these relations.<sup>27</sup>

In drafting his land disarmament plan Esher was seeking to act in accordance with the Second League Assembly's decision to adopt the recommendation of the Third Committee:

That the Temporary Mixed Commission be asked to make proposals on general lines for the reduction of national armaments which, in order to secure precision, should be in the form of a draft treaty or

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<sup>25</sup>Lloyd George Papers: F16/7/76, letter from Esher to Fisher, 21 December 1921.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. and Richardson A History of Disarmament and Arms Control, p.180

<sup>27</sup>Lees-Milne, op.cit., p.336

other equally definite plan to be presented to the Council if possible before the Assembly next year.<sup>28</sup>

Esher rejected the idea of a draft treaty on the rather imprecise ground that it would not be 'profitable' but he thought that the TMC would be able to come forward with a plan of the type envisaged by the Third Committee.<sup>29</sup> Esher's plan quite explicitly drew on the Washington precedent of applying armaments restrictions according to a fixed ratio. In his scheme metropolitan standing armies would be limited in size on a numerical basis. Esher established units of men, numbering 30,000, and then allocated to each Power a co-efficient by which these units would be multiplied to give the number of men allowed to each Power. The plan applied only to metropolitan military and air units so that the imperial Powers were able to decide freely the size of the forces they required for colonial defence. It also excluded reserve or territorial forces but it included the permanent staffs of such forces together with all permanently armed police forces. Esher also proposed arrangements which would have made the PAC responsible for the implementation of this disarmament scheme. The PAC would be given greater authority in that it would be under a President appointed by the French Government and it was also to be made responsible both for reporting infringements of the plan to the League and for drawing up any military schemes necessary for the enforcement of the plan. Governments would also be required to provide air, military and naval attachés appointed by the PAC with such information concerning armaments as the Commission required.

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<sup>28</sup>Lloyd George Papers: F/16/7/82, Proposals put forward by Lord Esher for discussion at the next plenary meeting of the Commission, February 1922

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

Although Esher had rejected the idea of drafting a treaty, his scheme made explicit reference to the necessity of the Powers ratifying a treaty which would fix the ratio of their armed forces. Within six months of such ratification, the Powers would have to reduce their land and air forces to the levels which were set out in the final paragraph of Esher's plan. The German, Austrian, Bulgarian and Hungarian forces were to remain as defined in the relevant Peace Treaties but figures were provided for all the other European Powers which were members of the League. France would have the largest land and air forces, set at 180,000, Poland would have 120,000, Czechoslovakia, Britain, Greece, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Roumania and Spain would have 90,000 each, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland would have 60,000 and, finally, Portugal would have 30,000. These limitations were to remain in force for ten years.<sup>30</sup>

Esher was clearly seeking to gain French support by allocating to it the largest number of forces and placing a strengthened PAC under a French President. Further, by excluding from the forces to be limited those stationed overseas there was a greater likelihood of the plan winning the support of the principal imperial Powers, France and Britain. Esher had, in fact, discussed the outline of his plan with French military officers 'who nearly had a fit' but then gave their provisional agreement when they saw the figures arrived at under the ratio.<sup>31</sup> He had not, however, had any talks with British officers about his proposals and his comment to Fisher - 'I cannot imagine what our W.O. will say' - indicated that he expected opposition from this source.<sup>32</sup> There were signs, though, at this early stage, of significant political support for Esher in Britain.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Lloyd George Papers: F16/7/81, letter from Esher to Fisher, 21 February 1922

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

Fisher wrote expressing his satisfaction that Esher had 'launched a plan for reduction on a big scale' because this would provide the next League Assembly with a 'signe de vie' from the TMC.<sup>33</sup> At this time Hankey also appeared very encouraging and gave every impression of wanting to see the League take the initiative in international disarmament discussions:

I have not had time to get in touch with your work yet, but I hope to do so shortly. My view is that the League of Nations should take up the whole of the work of the Washington Conference on armaments and apply it throughout the world. Thus, the principles of the Naval Agreement should be extended to the Powers who did not take part in the discussions on armaments at Washington and all the nations which are members of the League should be asked to agree to the Poison Gas Resolutions and any other of the same type. I only throw this observation out for you to think about. I also made the same suggestion to Eric Drummond.<sup>34</sup>

Hankey's deputy as Cabinet Secretary, Thomas Jones, was also in communication with Esher and he described the plan as 'admirable'.<sup>35</sup> This support soon cooled, however, in the face of opposition from other Powers, opinion within the League and the War Office.

It is remarkable, in view of Esher's close connections with leading British politicians and officials, that even in mid-March 1922 the Foreign Office had no details of his scheme and had to write to the Cabinet Office seeking further

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<sup>33</sup>Esher Papers: 5/59, undated letter from Fisher to Esher

<sup>34</sup>Esher Papers: 19/5, letter from Hankey to Esher, 27 February 1922.

<sup>35</sup>Esher Papers: 19/5, letter from Jones to Esher, 21 March 1922

information before being able to reply to a letter from the Italian Ambassador, Giacomo de Martino. De Martino had written to Crowe asking for the views of the British Government on Esher's scheme and declaring that the scheme was unacceptable to the Italian Government. The Cabinet Office reply to Crowe provided a copy of the Esher plan and suggested that he should write to the Italian Ambassador distancing the Government from Esher's scheme. It should be pointed out that the Government had not yet considered the scheme, that Esher's proposals had not been 'inspired or initiated' by official sources and that TMC members, other than those representing the PAC, the International Labour Office and the Provisional Economic and Financial Commission, did not represent individual Governments and, therefore, had complete freedom of action.<sup>36</sup> Crowe replied to de Martino in just these terms but this episode provided Crowe with a further opportunity to minute his dissatisfaction with the arrangement by which Esher sat on the TMC with complete freedom of action. Crowe considered that this was a potential source of trouble because others would regard Esher as a Government representative no matter how strongly the Government asserted the contrary.<sup>37</sup>

Crowe's irritation was entirely justified but the nature of Esher's position enabled the Government initially to give some informal encouragement to his disarmament initiative without having to take responsibility for it. De Martino's letter, however, forced the Government's hand. At this stage it could have given the Esher plan greater official support but this was not forthcoming and, although the Prime Minister was kept informed about the initiative, it was discussed neither by the CID nor the Cabinet. In view of its frequently stated desire to see agreement on the limitation of land and air forces, the Government

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<sup>36</sup>FO371/8317: Cabinet Office letter to Crowe, 23 March 1922

<sup>37</sup>FO371/8317: minute by Crowe, 28 March 1922

was unwise to distance itself from the Esher plan so early in its life. There was little to lose in encouraging further consideration of the plan and much to gain in terms of a possible improvement in European relations and a lifting of the threat of renewed armaments competition. As it was, by detaching itself from the plan the Government exposed it to serious attack.

First, Esher's proposals were considered at the League Council meeting of 25 March 1922. On this occasion the Italian representative, the Marquis Guglielmo Imperiali, expressed the opinion that the TMC had exceeded its duty in proposing a scale of co-efficients for the limitation of land arms.<sup>38</sup> Fisher, who had remained a Council member, despite resigning from the TMC, agreed with Imperiali but he did not wish to restrict the freedom of the TMC and he pointed out that it was up to the Council to decide whether or not to transmit the TMC plan to Governments and up to Governments to decide whether or not to reject the plan. Imperiali had support from the French representative, Léon Bourgeois, but Fisher argued that there was no need to limit the discussions of the TMC as long as they were kept secret. Fisher's latitudinarian view appears to have won the day for the Council decided only that its minutes should be transmitted to the TMC.

The objections expressed by the Marquis Imperiali and the support which he received from Fisher were used by the Army Council to justify its rejection of Esher's proposals. The Army Council's principal objection, however, was simply that the ratio allocated to Britain did not provide the country with a sufficiently large military force. Under Esher's plan the Army and Air Force would be allocated 90,000 men but the Army Council's estimate of the number it required

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<sup>38</sup>Esher Papers: 19/7, minutes of a meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, 25 March 1922.

for the future, leaving the RAF out of the allocation, was 121,500.<sup>39</sup> This Army Council opposition could not in itself be a valid reason for rejecting the Esher plan for its very object was to bring about a reduction in land and air forces: it could not do so if it simply confirmed the numbers of effectives required by the Army high commands of the various European powers. It could be argued, quite legitimately, that British military policy was based on the requirements of imperial defence and did not take account of the scale of forces maintained by any other Power. The British Government did, however, wish to bring about a reduction in armaments, even if that was for primarily internal reasons rather than because it was committed to a policy of disarmament. This presented clear problems regarding British military policy which could only be resolved through the exercise of political will. As has been seen, such political will was conspicuous by its absence. This meant that if the plan was to have any chance of survival, it would have to win significant support within the key institutions of the League. This was not to be and both the PAC and the TMC decided that the Esher plan was an inappropriate instrument for the achievement of land and air disarmament.

Although Esher presented his plan at the third session of the TMC in February 1922, it was not discussed in that forum until the fourth session which took place in Paris from 3-7 July 1922. Then the TMC decided that Esher's proposals should be referred both to a technical sub-committee and to the PAC for further consideration.<sup>40</sup> It was in these two forums that the most important criticisms of the plan were put forward and one of the most powerful voices against the plan was that of Colonel Réquin, the French military representative

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<sup>39</sup>Cab4/8: CID memorandum 341-B, 6 May 1922

<sup>40</sup>FO371/8318: resolutions adopted by the TMC at its Fourth Session, 3-7 July 1922



on the PAC and a member of the TMC. In a paper prepared for the technical sub-committee established by the TMC, Réquin rejected the idea that it was possible to assess a country's military strength solely on the basis of its numerical size in peace time. He did not deny that this was a significant factor but he argued that there were others which were of equal, if not greater, importance:

The possibilities of organising the whole nation when mobilised, the military training of all its citizens, the figures of its population, its land and sea transport facilities, its resources in raw materials, its industrial capacity and its readiness to adapt its peace-time stores or natural industries to war purposes - these are the essential factors on which a nation's military strength depends.<sup>41</sup>

Réquin argued that it was inappropriate to apply the Washington formula of a ratio to the land forces of the European Powers. This was because at Washington the agreement reached applied only to one element of the Powers' naval forces, namely, battleships, and the ratio applied 'harmonized with their respective policies'.<sup>42</sup> By contrast, Réquin considered that Esher was seeking to impose an arbitrary ratio on the European Powers based on a co-efficient which was not justified on any clear basis:

If some state or other requests to be allowed to retain an army of 90,000, it will not be because three times 30 is 90, but because,

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<sup>41</sup>CTA141: 'Observations by Lt.Colonel E.Réquin on Lord Esher's Scheme', 24 July 1922

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

when its national resources have been taken into account, 90,000 will be sufficient for it in its military organisation.<sup>43</sup>

Réquin attached considerable importance to the fact that naval forces could not be rapidly expanded following the outbreak of war whereas land forces underwent considerable and rapid change following mobilisation. Esher's scheme, by focusing only on the peace time strength of land forces, disregarded what Réquin considered to be essential, 'the potential military strength of every state'.<sup>44</sup> For this reason Réquin regarded Esher's thinking as being some one hundred and fifty years out of date. The plan might have been appropriate in the eighteenth century, 'in the days when professional armies had an existence entirely distinct from that of the nation and went to war on the basis of their peace time armaments, without the rest of the nation taking part', but it had no relevance to the 1920s.<sup>45</sup> Réquin did not simply expose what he considered to be the inadequacies of the Esher plan; he also set out a different basis for addressing the armaments problem. Réquin wished to see the indirect method applied to the problem of land forces in the early 1920s for he argued in favour of addressing the relevant political problems:

...it is not a question of fixing a ratio between States, but of discovering, for each of them, the minimum peace armament corresponding to its needs and to its responsibilities. These needs and responsibilities vary with the political situation. It is, therefore,

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

first of all the political problem which must be solved, and its solution will not be attained by employing a dozen figures or so.<sup>46</sup>

This critique of the Esher plan, coming as it did from the military representative at Geneva of the League's largest military Power, was bound to exert a considerable influence on the discussions of the TMC's technical sub-committee and its report echoed a number of Réquin's observations.

Réquin has been described as 'one of the clearest brains, most determined wills and most commanding personalities which the peculiar world of Geneva experts has known'.<sup>47</sup> His criticism of Esher for putting forward proposals based only on the peace-time strength of an army is flawed, however, in that it was clearly impossible to limit the military strength of an army once it was mobilized: a nation at war would use all the resources it possessed to ensure its survival and would accept no limitation on the expansion of its land and air forces. This was recognized by the special sub-committee of the TMC which had been set up to consider the Esher plan. It produced a report based on its meetings in London from 3-5 August and in Geneva on 30 August 1922.<sup>48</sup> Although the sub-committee held that Esher was right to focus on the limitation of the peace-time strength of military forces, at the outset of its report it stated that Esher's proposals could not be accepted because they were based on arbitrarily chosen co-efficients and did not take account of the requirements of national safety. An assessment of a State's national safety had, in the opinion of the sub-committee, to be based upon estimates of the forces of neighbouring countries which might pose a threat and of the assistance which might be provided by other States. The

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

<sup>47</sup>Madariaga, Disarmament, p.95

<sup>48</sup>CTA139: Report of the Special Committee to the TMC, undated.

sub-committee nevertheless considered that there was value in seeking, as Esher had done, to find a means by which the national forces of a State might be measured. They agreed, however, with Réquin that this could not be achieved simply by measuring numerical strength alone: account also had to be taken of the war material available to a nation. This, they considered, was a task for the PAC, which was also examining the Esher plan, but they did suggest the possibility of using budgetary assessment as a means of measuring the strength of an army and, therefore, of the limitation of such strength.<sup>49</sup>

The PAC's analysis of Esher's proposals was carried out separately by the Military, Naval and Air Sub-Commissions, each of which met on 30 August 1922 to consider the question, 'Is it possible to find a common measure of the military forces of the different states in time of peace ?'<sup>50</sup> Esher's scheme did, of course, only apply to land and air forces but it was considered by the Naval Sub-Commission simply to ensure that the PAC's examination was complete. Not surprisingly, the Naval Sub-Commission answered the question in the affirmative because the Washington Treaty was based on just the principles that Esher was seeking to apply to land forces. The Air Sub-Commission took a similar view as regards lighter-than-air-craft because it held that individual airships could constitute a common unit of measurement, although the existence of commercial airships, which could be used for military purposes, would ensure that the coefficient was not entirely accurate.<sup>51</sup> In all other respects, however, the Military and Air Sub-Commissions declared Esher's plan to be unworkable.

The Military Sub-Commission followed Réquin in criticizing the plan for taking account only of effectives when, in fact, a State's military strength

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>CTA169: Report of the PAC on the Draft Scheme for the Reduction of Armaments proposed by Lord Esher, 1 September 1922

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

comprised a number of other factors, including material and its budgetary allocation. It also argued that all these factors varied in value from one State to another as a result of differences in organization and use. This applied even to the element on which Esher's plan was based, the number of effectives which a State maintained:

From the point of view of national security, long-service soldiers have a greater value than conscripts. The former are able to serve as cadres, while the latter are not. From the point of view of the maintenance of internal order, on the other hand, they are of equal value. Furthermore, the total number of men may be temporarily increased by reservists undergoing their period of training. In consequence, there is variation in number and in value from the point of view both of peace and of war.<sup>52</sup>

As far as military expenditure was concerned, the Sub-Commission argued that this was subject to very considerable variation according to price differences between States and variations in the value of gold. Although it claimed that it would be possible for a technical committee, such as the PAC, to provide an approximate estimate of a State's military power, the Sub-Commission concluded that 'no examination of peace strengths would be of value for purposes of comparison'.<sup>53</sup>

The Air Sub-Commission had two principal arguments against the Esher plan. First it set out the reasons why a common unit of measurement for air forces could not be established. It rejected the possibility of taking individual

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

aircraft as a unit of measurement because there was considerable variation in their engine-power and argued that engine-power itself could not be a basis for comparison on the ground that the method by which it was measured differed between States. Further, a State's geographical and political location affected the nature of its air armament so that 'some States would possess a more effective armament by using light fighting machines than by employing powerful craft with a wide radius of action'.<sup>54</sup> The Sub-Commission also argued that it would be impossible to establish a system by which the reserve aeronautical stocks and spare parts which States possessed could be effectively inspected, yet these were factors of considerable importance in measuring a country's air power. When it turned its attention to budgetary methods of assessment, the Sub-Commission argued that variations in States' budgeting methods meant that it would be impossible to determine those sums which were being spent on war material. Further, given the rapid development of air power, States were likely to find it necessary to spend considerable amounts simply to maintain the effectiveness of their air forces, without actually increasing the number of military aircraft which they possessed. The second point which it put forward against the Esher plan was that it was inappropriate to try to compare States' air forces in peace time because they could be rapidly expanded in the event of war by the modification of commercial aircraft. On these bases, then, the Air Sub-Commission followed its military counterpart in declaring that the Esher plan could not be adopted as a practical and effective means by which disarmament might be achieved.<sup>55</sup>

The combined weight of these criticisms from the TMC and the PAC spelled the end for Esher's plan. Esher himself had been concerned that the approach of the TMC to his proposals was entirely inappropriate in two

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

important respects. First, having put his proposals before the TMC in February, Esher was concerned that a too early discussion of them would upset the French and thereby exacerbate Anglo-French relations when his principal purpose had been to do something which would improve these relations. In mid-June 1922, Esher wrote to Balfour saying that he had heard rumours that the TMC was to meet later that month and that his disarmament scheme would then be discussed. He feared that this discussion would not meet with French approval and therefore wanted it deferred.<sup>56</sup> In May, however, the Foreign Office had pressed for an early meeting of the TMC.<sup>57</sup> This pressure, initiated by Fisher, led the Council to ask the TMC to meet in the near future: as has been seen, the fourth session took place in Paris from 3-7 July. Having secured this meeting of the TMC, the Government could not then ask for it to be postponed and, in any case, Esher's fears about Anglo-French relations deteriorating because his plan was being considered by the TMC in Paris were misplaced. He did not represent the British Government and his proposals were very favourable to France: they would have the largest Army in Europe and the unrestricted right to recruit more colonial troops. When Balfour replied to Esher, he explained that discussion of his proposals by the TMC could not be prevented:

They are formally before the Commission and for good or for evil probably I think for good, they will certainly be considered. Among other people, Bob Cecil is, I think determined to raise them.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>FO371/8318: letter from Esher to Balfour, 12 June 1922

<sup>57</sup>FO371/8317: minute by Orde, 5 May 1922

<sup>58</sup>FO371/8318: letter from Balfour to Esher, 20 June 1922

The second reason for Esher's dissatisfaction with the TMC's treatment of his proposals was the fact that they were submitted to a technical sub-committee and to the PAC for further consideration. By this time Cecil had joined the TMC and put forward his plan for a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee (TMG). It was this proposed Treaty, together with Esher's plan, that the technical sub-committee of the TMC, under Cecil's chairmanship, was to consider. Esher clearly thought that this way forward indicated a lack of enthusiasm both for his plan and for the TMG. He made this quite clear in a letter to Cecil written at the start of August:

By appointing a purely Technical Sub-Committee the T.M.C. indicated that the views of the non-Techniciens [sic] were of no importance in the examination of your plan and mine.<sup>59</sup>

The attention given to Cecil's TMG within the League over the next two and a half years suggests that Esher's judgement was not entirely correct but his opposition to this procedure was certainly not misplaced. In putting forward his proposals Esher was seeking to move towards disarmament, in terms of both process and product, but he was under no illusions about the dangers which would continue to confront the international community. Rather than offering a panacea, his clear objective was to make war less likely:

The plan for limiting the numbers of established armies on a peace footing, which bears my name, but of which I do not claim to be the

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<sup>59</sup>Esher Papers: 19/7, Esher to Cecil, 1 August 1922



inventor<sup>60</sup>, was put forward to show that a scheme of disarmament could be practically handled, if the goodwill was there. I have never contended that to limit armaments was to end the possibility of war. But I do contend that it brings within narrow limits the possibility of sudden attack by one nation upon another. For this reason the experiment is worth trying, always assuming that the people of the world are serious in desiring to reduce the chances of war.<sup>61</sup>

It was for this reason that Esher wished to avoid a situation in which his plan was subjected to detailed scrutiny by technical experts who would undoubtedly produce a range of objections that would kill it and destroy any possibility of it having the ameliorating effects intended by its author. Instead, as Esher explained in a memorandum which was circulated to members of the TMC, he wanted the plan to be placed intact before the next Assembly as evidence that the TMC had responded to the previous Assembly's instructions to come forward with a treaty or plan for disarmament. He did not, however, want the plan to be considered at the Assembly: that task should be postponed until 1923.<sup>62</sup> Such a procedure would undoubtedly have ensured for it a political rather than a technical analysis, at least in the first instance. As it was, Esher believed that the TMC was rushing unnecessarily and that there was, by late August, insufficient time for the TMC to produce 'a reasoned scheme' for the opening of the Assembly on 4 September.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>This was a reference to Major-General Frederick Maurice with whom Esher had worked on the scheme

<sup>61</sup>Esher Papers: 19/7, Esher to Cecil, 1 August 1922

<sup>62</sup>Esher Papers: 19/7, memorandum by Esher, 26 August 1922

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

Although the League did not formally reject Esher's plan, there was little hope of its making further progress and this resulted in his resignation from the TMC in January 1923. During 1922 a different but potentially complementary means of achieving some measure of disarmament emerged.<sup>64</sup> At the TMC meeting of July 1921, Fisher had suggested the possibility of budgetary limitation of armaments and this idea was taken up by Cecil when he joined the TMC in July 1922. In fact, Cecil had submitted a paper on this subject to the technical sub-committee which the TMC had appointed to consider both the Esher plan and Cecil's TMG. As well as submitting his paper on budgetary limitation to the technical sub-committee of the TMC, Cecil also sent it to Esher and to Cavan, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, for their comments.<sup>65</sup>

Cecil's clear intention in proposing budgetary limitation was to achieve land disarmament through the development of a practical method by which the amount of armament or material with which armies were equipped might be limited or reduced. He identified three factors which influenced the strength of an army: the number of regular troops, the length of service of each man and the material possessed by the forces. Cecil had no proposals for limiting the length of service and so he quite explicitly set it to one side. As regards material, he wanted 'to find some method of limitation which shall be elastic enough to give governments liberty to construct the weapons they wish to have, but which will nevertheless effectively limit the total quantity of their armament'.<sup>66</sup> He held that detailed lists of the sort imposed upon Germany in 1919 would clearly be the simplest way of achieving limitation but precisely because such lists were not elastic, Cecil recognized that this approach would be unlikely to win

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<sup>64</sup>Esher Papers: 5/59, Law to Esher, 31 January 1923

<sup>65</sup>WO/32/5941: 'Note on the limitation of the equipment of land armies by the method of budgetary appropriation', 26 July 1922

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

international support. The listing method would only be acceptable as a starting point. Given that nations would not destroy weapons already possessed, such weapons or material would have to be listed at the outset of an armaments agreement. In order to deal with the two elements of military strength which Cecil thought it was practical to limit, that is, the number of regular troops and the material they possessed, he proposed what was effectively a development of Esher's scheme. The number of regular troops would be broken down into units of 30,000 and each unit would be assigned a fixed annual budgetary appropriation:

This sum should be spent exactly as each government wishes to spend it. Some government might prefer to concentrate on one class of weapon and others on other classes, but their total amount of equipment would, after their existing stocks are obsolete, be strictly limited by this budgetary appropriation.<sup>67</sup>

In defence of this proposal Cecil argued that the weapons purchased by a given sum of money did not vary from country to country because 'The price of guns, tanks, aeroplanes etc. depends almost entirely on the price of steel, and the price of steel is a world price roughly the same in every country'.<sup>68</sup> In military budgets it would be necessary, Cecil further argued, to separate expenditure on material from that on the maintenance of regular troops and fortifications. It would not matter, however, how much Powers spent on the maintenance of such troops, as long as their numbers were limited, and the cost of fortifications might also be

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

ignored on the ground that 'fortifications are purely defensive and cannot be used for aggressive attack, to prevent which is the object of disarmament'.<sup>69</sup>

Cecil's proposals received very different responses from Esher and the War Office. Esher had ruled out budgetary limitation when putting forward his scheme for ratios of men because the cost of personnel differed significantly from one country to another. He agreed with Cecil, however, that this was not the case as regards material, which was largely determined by raw material costs. Although his realism made him aware of the difficulties, he nevertheless considered that the project was within the realm of practical politics and therefore worth pursuing:

I am well aware that no plan that can be devised would be proof against deception and a determination on the part of a nation to violate its engagements. But given the searchlight of publicity, and the goodwill of nations to minimize the chances of war, to which the Prime Minister appealed a few days ago with such invincible eloquence, I think a plan for establishing a ratio of war material on a budgetary basis could be devised without much difficulty and I sincerely hope that this will be the conclusion of your Technical Committee.<sup>70</sup>

By contrast the War Office took a wholly negative position on budgetary limitation as proposed by Cecil. The War Office files provide no formal written response from Cavan but there are pencilled comments by an unidentified official in the margins of the copy of Cecil's paper. At the end of his paper Cecil asked

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Esher Papers: 19/7, Esher to Cecil, 1 August 1922

whether budgetary limitation would give the same amount of armament in every country, whether military budgets could be divided into separate categories and whether it would be possible to prevent Powers from secretly transferring funds from one category to another. The marginal comment next to each question is simply 'No'.<sup>71</sup>

Cecil did not allow the proposal to drop because of this negative War Office response and in January 1923 he submitted a memorandum to the CID which was effectively the same as his original paper. The essential difference is that he added two questions to the three with which he had concluded the earlier paper:

4. Is the danger of evasion of obligations greater in connection with this plan than in connection with any other scheme of limitation which can be devised ?

5. By what methods could such an agreement as this be controlled?<sup>72</sup>

Cecil's case in persisting with the idea of budgetary limitation was strengthened by the fact that during the discussions within the TMC concerning the Esher plan, 'The French representatives pointed out that their experts held that in estimating the strength of a given military force, only one-sixth must be allowed for man-power and five-sixths for the *matériel* with which it is equipped'.<sup>73</sup> In the next month the War Office did provide a formal written response to Cecil's ideas regarding budgetary limitation. This came in an appendix to a General Staff

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<sup>71</sup>WO/32/5941: 'Note on the limitation of the equipment of land armies by the method of budgetary appropriation', 26 July 1922

<sup>72</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 393-B, 5 January 1923

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. Italics original

memorandum dealing with the proposed TMG.<sup>74</sup> This was not a detailed response, however, and, rather than answering the questions which Cecil had posed, it scarcely went beyond restating them. It concluded with four questions, three of which were the same as those posed by Cecil in his January memorandum on the subject. The General Staff did, however, raise three objections to budgetary limitation of material. The first concerned the starting point for such a scheme. They agreed with Cecil that this would have to be the status quo but they were clearly unconvinced that Governments would reveal 'not only the extent of their reserve stocks, but also what they hope and trust are secret appliances and machines'.<sup>75</sup> They were similarly doubtful that it was possible to ignore the differences between countries in the maintenance costs of personnel because those countries which had to spend more would have less to spend on material and would thus be disadvantaged compared with those which could maintain personnel more cheaply. This was not a powerful argument, however, because it applied regardless of whether or not there was a disarmament agreement. Finally, the General Staff challenged the claim that it was possible to ignore the cost of fortifications on the ground that these were for defensive purposes only. This was because the building of effective fortifications could free men for offensive purposes. An additional problem which they identified was 'the possibility of transforming material intended, or said to be, for permanent fortifications into material susceptible of use by mobile troops'.<sup>76</sup>

The *non possumus* approach of the War Office and the failure of the Government to provide political support to the Esher plan and Cecil's scheme of

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<sup>74</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 395-B, February 1923.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

budgetary limitation which, like Esher's proposals, was not discussed in the Cabinet or the CID, restricted Britain's options concerning air policy. In the period 1921-23 there was increasing concern within the British Government about the extent to which British air power had fallen behind that of France.<sup>77</sup> At a CID meeting in October 1921 during which the forthcoming Washington Naval Conference was under consideration, Balfour stated that he just been made aware of the extent of French superiority in the air: at that time they had 47 squadrons to Britain's 3.<sup>78</sup> Six months later the Secretary of State for Air, Frederick Guest, drew the attention of the Cabinet to the plans of the French Government to increase the number of its long-range bombing squadrons from 62 to 140 and he also stated that the French were building 150 per month whereas Britain was building only 23 per year.<sup>79</sup> At this time a CID sub-committee was examining the extent of the continental air threat and Balfour once more returned to the subject in May 1922 when the sub-committee's report was before the CID. As Balfour stated, this imbalance was an extremely worrying situation if viewed from a purely strategic and tactical point of view. It was the case, however, that the international and diplomatic perspective had to be taken into consideration: it was 'hardly conceivable' that France would launch an air attack on Britain.<sup>80</sup> Yet this did not mean that Britain could simply ignore the growing discrepancy in air power between itself and France. In August 1922 the Cabinet was informed by the CID that the Home Defence Air Force should be increased to 500 planes, the minimum figure compatible with the country's safety. It was estimated that this would cost £2m p.a., £900,000 of which could

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<sup>77</sup>See Ferris, *op.cit.*, pp.126-132 for a discussion of British fears of a French air menace and Trenchard's cynical use of it to achieve his objectives for the RAF.

<sup>78</sup>Cab2/3: CID minutes, 14 October 1921

<sup>79</sup>Cab23/29: Cabinet conclusions, 15 March 1922

<sup>80</sup>Cab2/3: CID minutes, 24 May 1922

be obtained by savings on the Air Ministry vote with the remainder coming from savings on the Admiralty and War Office votes.<sup>81</sup> In order to make the recommendation even more compelling, 'The Cabinet were reminded that the present weak position of Great Britain in the air placed us diplomatically at a great disadvantage vis à vis the French Government'.<sup>82</sup>

A key figure in these considerations was the Cabinet and CID Secretary, Maurice Hankey, who saw the air question as one element in a complex equation which had a wide ranging impact on the financial position of the British Government and its defence policy. In late July he had circulated to the Prime Minister, Balfour and Chamberlain a copy of a memorandum which he had written on the air question and which was shortly to be considered by the CID.<sup>83</sup> What concerned Hankey was that Britain was pressured, on the one hand, by the need to counter the French air threat and, on the other, by the need to counter the US naval threat. If Britain could not provide the resources to deal with both these challenges, it had to resolve 'not a mere air, naval or military question, but a tremendous question of Imperial policy'.<sup>84</sup> In short, the Government would have to choose between inferiority to the US at sea and to the French in the air. According to Hankey, this dilemma did not have to be faced before there had been consideration of resolving the basic problem by means of three inter-related elements. First, he argued that there was scope for a reorganization of the Air Ministry's budget. His analysis of that budget showed that 77% was spent on overhead charges, a figure which he thought to be excessive. He suggested that the Government should allow the Air Ministry an additional £2m on the condition that they found a further £2m for aircraft out of these overhead

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<sup>81</sup>Cab23/30: Cabinet conclusions, 3 August 1922

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. Underlining original

<sup>83</sup>Lloyd George Papers: F26/2/9, memorandum by Hankey, 28 July 1922

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.



charges. He calculated that the £4m which would thus be made available could provide 40 additional squadrons. If 2 squadrons were brought home from abroad and added to the existing 3 squadrons, this would provide a total of 45 squadrons and 'Such a force would at least not be contemptible, and as finances improve, could be increased'.<sup>85</sup> The second element in Hankey's proposed approach involved warning the Dominions that the French air menace was so severe that Britain would have to consider cancelling part of its capital ship building programme unless the Dominions were prepared to co-operate more closely with Britain on naval matters. Finally, Hankey suggested using a carrot and stick approach to France. The stick would take the form of a warning that Britain would do all that was necessary to achieve equality of air power with France but as this stick was wielded, Britain should also hold out the prospect of arms limitation and a pact:

In order to avoid a new and ruinous competition in armaments, we should propose a definite scale of mutual limitation. This might be combined with some concession in regard to the French debt, and be one of the conditions of a pact, if pact there is to be.<sup>86</sup>

Hankey's views are of some interest from the point of view of land and air disarmament and its relationship to British defence and foreign policy. The Cabinet Secretary was a significant influence and gave considerable thought to these matters from an essentially realist point of view. In this instance he was concerned with the inter-relationship of air arms limitation as a factor in Britain's internal armaments and financial policy, on the one hand, and its foreign and

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

Dominions policy on the other. Although he was not approaching the issue from the perspective of a commitment to disarmament, as defined in this thesis - his concern was to reach an agreement with France rather than to work towards a general disarmament agreement through the League - Hankey nevertheless considered that the achievement of a scale of mutual air arms limitation was at least possible. Support at this stage for an initiative combining the Esher and Cecil proposals on land and air disarmament might, therefore, have made sound political sense.

Instead, by May 1923 the Government was moving inexorably towards an increase in the RAF and Salisbury was authorized to state in a House of Lords debate that such a development would 'in all probability be required'.<sup>87</sup> At this time French troops were occupying the Ruhr following the German failure to maintain their reparations payments and there was considerable concern within the Cabinet that French policy might result in armaments competition between Britain and France. In the following month the Cabinet strengthened this statement. On 13 June it was agreed that Derby should make an announcement in the Lords that 'no material further reduction in the total establishment of the Regular Army would take place' and one week later the Cabinet took the decision to begin expansion of the RAF so as to provide a Home Defence Air Force strong enough to protect it from attack by the strongest air force within striking distance, that is, the French: a strength of 600 first line machines was envisaged.<sup>88</sup> In making these announcements, however, the Government was still concerned that it should not be seen to be closing the door on armaments limitation. It was thought that in making his statement, Derby should point out that Britain had reduced its land forces to the lowest

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<sup>87</sup>Cab23/45: Cabinet conclusions, 9 May 1923

<sup>88</sup>Cab23/46: Cabinet conclusions, 13 and 20 June 1923

level consistent with national safety.<sup>89</sup> This, it was hoped, would avoid 'any possible setback to the cause of the limitation of armaments'.<sup>90</sup> When Baldwin announced the RAF increases on 26 June 1923, he made a statement which seemed to go beyond Derby's self-justifying nod in the direction of arms limitation and offered some encouragement to the development of a general scheme for the limitation of air armaments. He declared that the Government would co-operate in any such plan that was based on the Washington Naval Treaty.<sup>91</sup> Neither Derby nor Baldwin was, of course, suggesting any initiative on the part of the Government and with this announcement of air rearmament, the moment was lost.

The Esher plan and Cecil's ideas on budgetary limitation of material meant that there were a few months in 1922 during which it might have been possible to reach agreement on a basis for the comparison and limitation of European land and air forces. It is true that the French obsession with security was an obstacle which would have been extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to overcome. The Esher-Cecil proposals were killed too early, however, and the responsibility rests with both the British Government and the TMC. Despite wanting an agreement which would limit land and air arms, the British Government did not maintain a close interest in the initiatives put forward in the TMC. Instead of using its considerable prestige and influence in favour of further discussion and negotiation of the Esher-Cecil proposals, it revealed a crucial lack of political will and imagination. For its part, the TMC made the mistake, as Esher himself pointed out, of immediately subjecting his proposals to

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<sup>89</sup>Cab23/46: Cabinet conclusions, 13 June 1923

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Air5/360/S.23438: Comments on Proposed Air Staff Memorandum on the Limitation of Air Armament; Air Staff Memorandum on Limitation of Air Armament, December 1923

examination by technical experts, on both the TMC and PAC, whose criticisms they too readily accepted. Esher's subsequent resignation from the TMC and Cecil's domination of it meant that the attempt to base a land and air disarmament agreement on direct methods was effectively rejected and attention shifted to Cecil's very different initiative, the TMG.

## Chapter 8 - The Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee 1922-24.

Although Cecil had given considerable time to the possibility of achieving disarmament through the direct method, in the period from mid-1922 until the end of 1923 most of his energies were focused on an attempt to deal simultaneously with the problems of security and disarmament. He was convinced that 'without an effective guarantee of security, there could be no hope of disarmament and that, without a reduction and limitation of armaments, a guarantee of security was impracticable'.<sup>1</sup> As a result largely of Cecil's efforts, in late 1923 the League was able to submit a draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TMA) to Governments for their consideration.<sup>2</sup> The TMA was founded on two schemes presented to the TMC, one by Cecil and one by the French representative, Colonel Réquin. In neither Cecil's initial proposal nor in the TMA were there any technical details concerning the means by which armaments were to be reduced. In this respect it was very different from the Esher scheme and constituted the first attempt to achieve disarmament by the indirect method. Unlike the proposals to extend the principles of the Washington Treaty to non-signatory Powers possessing capital ships and the Esher plan, the TMA received much attention from decision-makers within the British Government. Their responses revealed considerable hostility to the scheme and very little understanding of or support for the principles of disarmament. A treaty of mutual guarantee would have involved Britain in commitments to the defence of other Powers, France in particular, and there were few in the Government who were prepared to give this serious consideration.

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<sup>1</sup>Cecil of Chelwood, Viscount A Great Experiment (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941), p.152

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix 2 for the text of the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance

On 25 March 1922 the League Council appointed Cecil to the TMC and he very soon established himself as its dominant personality.<sup>3</sup> At the fourth session of the TMC, which took place in Paris from 3-7 July 1922, he presented his proposals to link security and disarmament in a draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee (TMG). In so doing, Cecil, like Esher before him, was responding to a decision of the League's Second Assembly in 1921. On 1 October it adopted the report which had been put forward by the Third Committee four days before. This contained eleven recommendations, one of which invited the TMC to put forward general proposals for arms reduction 'in the form of a draft treaty or other equally definite plan, to be presented to the Council if possible before the Assembly next year'.<sup>4</sup> Unlike Esher, however, Cecil believed that it was practical to submit such proposals in the form of a draft treaty. At this time Cecil was not a member of the Government but he sought the assistance of the War Office in developing his ideas. He received a very discouraging response.

Early in July, shortly after attending the fourth session of the TMC, Cecil invited the Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, to comment on the two papers which he had prepared concerning disarmament. The first, 'Draft Resolution on the Principles of Disarmament', set out the basis of Cecil's thinking on the subject at this stage. He held that 'the majority of Governments would be unable to accept responsibility for a serious reduction of armaments unless they received in exchange a satisfactory guarantee of the safety of their countries'. Such a guarantee could be provided through 'a general defensive agreement between all the countries concerned, binding all or some of them to provide immediate and effective assistance in accordance with a prearranged

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<sup>3</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51110, Drummond to Cecil, 31 March 1922

<sup>4</sup>FO371/7056: Report by the Third Committee, 27 September 1921.

plan in the event of one of them being attacked'.<sup>5</sup> The second paper, 'New Disarmament Proposals', was an early form of Cecil's draft Treaty.<sup>6</sup> Under this nations would agree to arms reduction and mutual assistance through the League in the event of attack. No Power was to be required, however, to provide such assistance outside its own continent.

The response of the British General Staff to Cecil's proposals was notably unenthusiastic and based on hard-headed realism. They asserted that conventional deterrence held the key to national security, not mutual assistance and the authority of the League:

It has always been accepted that the only satisfactory guarantees against aggression are, in the case of a powerful State, the possession of such armed strength, either of its own or by virtue of an alliance, as would deter any other state or group of states from attack; or, in the case of a small state, the existence of a powerful state or group of states pledged to protect it.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this rejection of the fundamental premise on which the draft Treaty was based, they set out two practical military objections. First, in their view Cecil's idea that a nation's obligation to provide assistance to a State which was the victim of aggression should be limited to its own continent vitiated the whole Treaty. This was because the British Empire held possessions across the world. If Britain were to be attacked by Japan in India or Australasia, it would have to

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<sup>5</sup>WO32/5941: Proposals of the League of Nations regarding General Disarmament and Military Comments on, 15 July 1922

<sup>6</sup>WO32/5941: 'New Disarmament Proposals', 8 July 1922

<sup>7</sup>WO 32/5941: 'Proposals of the League of Nations regarding General Disarmament and Military Comments on', 15 July 1922

deal with this alone at a distance of more than 3-7,000 miles from its base.<sup>8</sup> This would, of course, have been the case whether or not there was a treaty of mutual guarantee. The key issue was that, in the event of conflict between European Powers, Britain would be required to take action against the aggressor. It was the case, however, that, by early 1924, there was Dominion opposition to the TMA. Canada, in particular, had stated that it would not be able to participate in the Treaty because of the continental limitation. It was both a North American State and a member of a worldwide Empire and its Government could not see how these potentially conflicting considerations could be reconciled.<sup>9</sup> At a meeting with Cecil on 19 June 1924, the Prime Minister, MacDonald, had argued that such Dominion opposition was a 'fatal bar' to the TMA. Cecil found this very difficult to accept and he responded by pointing out that it amounted 'to a new constitutional rule that this country can never enter into any engagement of importance without the assent of each one of the Dominions'. He was clearly very well aware that arguments against the TMA based on Dominion opposition were pretexts for those whose hostility to it stemmed from a fundamental rejection of a disarmament process based on the League.<sup>10</sup>

The General Staff's second practical objection concerned the proposal that any State which was a victim of aggression would first have to appeal to the League for assistance. This would inevitably result in a delay which would place all the advantages in the hands of the aggressor:

Time is the essential factor in war. Napoleon has said "ask me anything in war except time". Such a moment is not the time to

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Cab4/11: CID memorandum 488-B, 18 March 1924

<sup>10</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51081, Cecil to MacDonald, 23 June 1924



indulge in the passing of notes and the holding of conferences, only instant action on a prepared plan will be of the slightest avail.<sup>11</sup>

These inter-related issues of delay and the need for pre-arranged military plans were ones which the War Office continually repeated during the period in which the draft Treaty was being considered and they were also dealt with by Worthington-Evans in a letter to Cecil in August 1922. Worthington-Evans wrote that League action under the Treaty would require military co-operation in advance to produce plans to deal with all possibilities of attack by one nation or group of nations against another nation or group of nations. He claimed, therefore, that British officers might be given the unreal task of preparing schemes to meet an attack by other signatory Powers on the British Empire. In his reply Cecil accepted the force of Worthington-Evans objections regarding the formulation of military plans against possible acts of aggression and pointed out that they had already been strongly put by the French. He was also able to tell Worthington-Evans that suggestions for meeting these objections had been made by a special sub-commission of the TMC, largely the work of Réquin.<sup>12</sup>

This special commission of the TMC met in London from 3-5 August and in Geneva on 30 August 1922. It argued that there would be two distinct periods in any war which occurred as a result of aggression after there had been a general and mutual reduction of armaments. The first period, which it designated period A, would involve the Powers employing only those forces which they had been allowed under the arms reduction treaty and would probably only last for a few months. The second period, period B, would be

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<sup>11</sup>WO32/5941: 'Proposals of the League of Nations regarding General Disarmament and Military Comments on', 15 July 1922

<sup>12</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51095, Worthington-Evans to Cecil, 11 August 1922 and Cecil to Worthington-Evans, 14 August 1922

characterized by the employment of forces mobilized and trained following the outbreak of war. If the guarantee provided under the treaty were to be effective and thereby make possible a significant reduction in armaments, the special commission held that it would have to ensure that any State which was the victim of aggression would not be totally defeated during period A. Ideally it should ensure that an aggressor State would almost certainly be defeated during period A. It did not, however, believe that it would be possible to prepare in advance detailed military plans to meet every conceivable case of aggression. In order to overcome this problem it suggested that any State which was either attacked or considered itself threatened with attack should appeal to the League Council and state the forces which it could provide to meet the attack during period A, the additional forces which it would require in order to defeat the aggressor and the States from which it wanted these forces to be drawn. If the Council considered the requests of the threatened State to be both reasonable and practical, it would invite the necessary States to provide the forces required and also, with the advice of the PAC, appoint one of these States to take charge of the forces. The special commission held that this machinery would require States to maintain forces consistent with the maintenance of national security and to ensure that certain elements of these armed forces were available to be used at the invitation of the Council.<sup>13</sup>

These proposals were far from being a solution to the problems identified by Worthington-Evans and the General Staff. They did, however, suggest a way forward and merited further consideration. Cecil not only referred to them in his letter of 14 August but also offered to send them to Worthington-Evans. The Coalition Government fell on 19 October, however, and there is no record of

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<sup>13</sup>CTA139: Report of the Special Commission to the TMC, undated

further correspondence between the two men on this matter. While Cecil hoped that the Third Assembly would provide a basis for further progress, he was under no illusions about the likely response of the War Office:

...I fear from the tone of your letter that we shall have to do what we can in this direction without the assistance of the British War Office.

I am sorry, but not surprised.<sup>14</sup>

Cecil's proposals were received in the Foreign Office on 26 July 1922. Its response was less negative than that of Worthington-Evans and the General Staff but it revealed very little enthusiasm for Cecil's initiative. Cecil Hurst, the Legal Adviser, understood, however, that it was likely to be discussed at the Third Assembly later in the year and it was important, therefore, for it to be given careful consideration. Hurst considered the main problem regarding any disarmament scheme to be political. The principal obstacle to disarmament, in his view, was France, and British policy on this question was inevitably determined by its interpretation of the French attitude. Hurst considered that there were two possible explanations of this attitude. The first was rooted in French fears concerning its security. In April 1919, Clemenceau believed that he had concluded an alliance with Britain and the USA which would secure France against any future German aggression. Colonel House, however, doubted that the US Senate would ratify the guarantee and on 27 June, the day before the Versailles Treaty was signed, Lloyd George introduced the word 'only' into the Anglo-French Treaty. This ensured that the British guarantee to France would come into force 'only when' the American Treaty was ratified. Antony Lentin has

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<sup>14</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51095, Cecil to Worthington-Evans, 14 August 1922

suggested that Clemenceau failed to notice this and on the next day he signed the Treaty.<sup>15</sup> When the US Senate refused to approve the Versailles Treaty, therefore, this tripartite arrangement collapsed and France had to face the problem of dealing single-handedly with any possible resurgence of German power. In this situation it was unrealistic to expect the French to reduce their armaments. Cecil's scheme would, however, provide France with the security that it required and thereby create the international context in which a general reduction and limitation of armaments might be possible. Hurst took the view that 'any scheme which helps the cause of disarmament by helping France to disarm deserves benevolent consideration at the hands of H.M.G.'<sup>16</sup>

Hurst also argued that it was possible to see French hostility to arms reduction as an essential element in an altogether more aggressive policy. He could not discount the possibility that France was 'profiting by the disappearance of the German menace to aid her in securing the hegemony of Europe in the manner that Louis Quatorze and Napoleon strove for it'.<sup>17</sup> If that were the case it would clearly be an error for the other Powers to reduce their armed forces. Hurst considered, therefore, that it was essential, to provide the very strongest opposition to Cecil's scheme, unless the Government was convinced that France would abide by it. The most logical way of testing the French Government's intentions was, as Hurst recognized, to give the draft Treaty 'at the least sympathetic consideration at Geneva' and see how they reacted to it.<sup>18</sup> At this stage, however, Hurst adopted a very negative attitude to the League. He

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<sup>15</sup>Lentin, A. 'Trick or Treat? The Anglo-French Alliance, 1919' in History Today, vol. 42, December 1992 and 'Une aberration inexplicable? Clemenceau and the Abortive Anglo-French Guarantee Treaty of 1919' in Diplomacy and Statecraft, vol.8, No.2, July 1997

<sup>16</sup>FO371/8331: memorandum by Hurst, 31 July 1922

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

referred to the Assembly as 'the happy hunting ground of the crank and the enthusiast' and suggested that there was a strong possibility that States would not fulfil their obligations under the TMA unless sanctions were imposed upon those which failed to assist the victim of aggression.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of August 1922 the Foreign Office decided, rather remarkably, that it was not required to provide an opinion concerning the draft Treaty as it was initially a matter for the CID and finally for the Cabinet. The Government, however, soon found itself under some pressure regarding the draft Treaty because of developments at the Third League Assembly. Since the 1921 Assembly the TMC had held three meetings and its report formed the basis of the deliberations of the League's Third Committee, which dealt with arms reduction and whose *rapporteur* was Cecil. As regards Cecil's draft Treaty, the Committee accepted his principle that a treaty of guarantee and arms reduction were 'the two essential parts of one policy' and that, if possible, they should be effected at the same time.<sup>20</sup> This agreement in principle was not unanimous, though, and there were some important points of difference on the Third Committee concerning the TMG.

Foreign Office notes on the Third Committee's work reveal that there were three schools of thought which would have to be reconciled if anything practical were to be achieved. Some, most notably Cecil himself, asserted that the Treaty should be universally binding. The Scandinavian Powers were unhappy at this prospect and 'took the line that disarmament might well proceed in certain areas and not in others'.<sup>21</sup> These Powers were apparently 'perturbed at

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>FO372/8319: Report of the Third Committee to the Third Assembly of the League of Nations, 22 September 1922

<sup>21</sup>FO371/8319: notes approved by Fisher on the work of the Third Committee of the League of Nations, 21 October 1922

the prospect of any Guarantee which would bind them, for example, to come forward and protect Finland or the new Baltic States from Russia, or which might bind, say, Sweden to definite engagements in the event of Roumania or Portugal being attacked'.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the British took the view that it was not possible for them to accept even the principle of a treaty of mutual guarantee. This position was set out by Fisher who stated that 'the policy of the British Empire was one, and that the contingency had to be faced, under a system of mutual Guarantee, of the Dominions of the Empire being called to give assistance in a cause in which they could have no immediate interest'.<sup>23</sup> It was to meet these different schools of thought that the Third Committee proposed, in resolution XIV, that either a general treaty or a number of partial treaties operating in specific areas should be considered.<sup>24</sup>

Resolution XIV was adopted by the League Assembly and in late October the Foreign Office received a letter from D. da Gama, the Acting President of the Council, asking the British Government to consider the proposal and submit their observations to the League by 1 June 1923.<sup>25</sup> The Foreign Office, however, held to its previous position, namely, that this was a matter on which the CID should prepare views so as to enable the Cabinet finally to decide policy. Segrave, Britain's naval representative on the PAC, urged the Foreign Office to encourage the CID to work quickly because the French wanted to discuss the issue at a PAC meeting in early December.<sup>26</sup> Crowe was extremely unhappy with the situation which had developed and asserted that Britain's representation at the League was poorly organized. Crowe believed that the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>FO372/8319: Report of the Third Committee to the Third Assembly of the League of Nations, 22 September 1922

<sup>25</sup>FO371/8319: letter from da Gama, 23 October 1922

<sup>26</sup>Adm1/8632/167: minute by Segrave, 13 November 1922

British representatives at the League should have supplied a report setting out their views and proposals concerning a treaty of mutual guarantee. Instead the Foreign Office had received only a 'rather vague and general note' by Fisher. This meant that it would be impossible for the British Government to provide a considered response by the beginning of December. If the French wished to discuss the subject at that early date, Crowe wrote that Britain would have to ask for a postponement.<sup>27</sup>

Segrave was not the only person seeking a rapid policy decision from the British Government for, just before Christmas 1922, in response to the resolutions adopted by the recent League Assembly, Cecil formally set out his draft TMG for consideration by the CID.<sup>28</sup> Cecil's TMG was quite complex, comprising seven sections and twenty five articles. Under the TMG signatory Powers would provide assistance to any State which was the victim of aggression. This assistance would take the form of a financial and economic blockade and the provision of stipulated portions of their military, naval and air forces. In addition, there would be supplementary military conventions for the defence of countries thought to be in particular danger. Under these conventions States would be committed to sending specific numbers of troops to specific areas in the event of war. This was an attempt to win French support: unless clear provision were made for its security, France would not agree to a treaty of mutual guarantee. The TMG envisaged that any State which was attacked would be able to resist, for a short period at least. During this time the League Council would organize a unified military command structure but, until this was established, the forces assisting a State which was being attacked would be under the command of that State. This would apply to naval forces as well as to

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<sup>27</sup>FO371/8319: minute by Crowe, 13 November 1922

<sup>28</sup>See Appendix 3 for the text of Cecil's draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee

land and air forces. States would only be required to provide land and air forces within their own continent but the obligation to provide naval forces would not be so limited as circumstances could be envisaged in which none but naval forces would be of any value, for example, a Japanese attack on Australia. At the core of Cecil's TMG, however, lay a commitment to arms reduction. Signatory Powers would be required to reduce their armed forces in time of peace to a level laid down by the League Council. Any Power which was the victim of aggression would be guaranteed the assistance of the other signatory Powers only if it had complied with this requirement. Cecil believed that, through this linkage of arms reduction and mutual guarantee against aggression, the TMG would ensure that 'aggressive warfare would become so dangerous that it would not, in fact, take place'. He recognized, however, the over-riding importance of great Power co-operation and asserted that the involvement of Germany or the Soviet Union was essential if the project were to be successful.<sup>29</sup>

Following the Third Assembly of the League, the British Service Departments submitted Cecil's TMG to much closer scrutiny. Within the Admiralty there was considerable concern that the Navy would be required to take on major responsibilities but that Britain would gain nothing in exchange. Segrave excluded the possibility of the TMG resulting in any reduction in the size of the Navy because, as a result of the Washington Treaty, it had already been reduced to the minimum compatible with imperial requirements. This meant that the key question, in his opinion, was the nature of the duties which the TMG would impose on the Navy. He thought that if the League had to deal with an aggressor, it was likely that naval forces would be called upon simply because they were available and this would inevitably place the British Navy in a position

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<sup>29</sup>Cab4/8: CID memorandum 383-B, 19 December 1922



of great importance. His concern was that the TMG might require the Navy to place at least a part of the Fleet at the call of the League Council, acting by a three-quarters majority. He pointed out that, in this respect, the TMG went beyond the League Covenant because the latter laid down that the Council's decisions had to be unanimous.<sup>30</sup> This proposed change in the Council's decision-making procedures also concerned Alexander Flint, Principal Assistant Secretary at the Admiralty. He was not, however, entirely negative in his attitude to Cecil's scheme for he thought that 'A great deal might be made of this Treaty of Mutual Guarantee if it was skilfully and carefully worked out'. Nevertheless, Flint did think that the proposed special arrangements for countries facing particular dangers indicated that France was likely to be the main beneficiary of the Treaty.<sup>31</sup> Captain John Hamilton, the Deputy Director of the Plans Division, writing for Pound, the Director of the Plans Division, concluded that the TMG would mean that 'the Navy of the most powerful State would be available for the weak power at the dictation of the League of Nations, whose prestige would be enhanced at the financial expense of the Power possessing the strong Navy'. For this reason he believed that Britain had little to gain from the TMG.<sup>32</sup> These views formed the basis of the Admiralty's first memorandum on the TMG. While strongly critical of Cecil's scheme, the Admiralty expressed less hostility to the idea of regional agreements. This was because such agreements, by definition, limited the requirement to take action to a specified geographical area: the Admiralty was determined to limit its commitments and 'to consider the effect on its interests before entering into any individual agreement'.<sup>33</sup> It was in Europe, though, that the main security fears existed and it was inconceivable that there

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<sup>30</sup>Adm1/8632/167: minute by Segrave, 13 November 1922

<sup>31</sup>Adm1/8632/167: minute by Flint, 14 November 1922

<sup>32</sup>Adm1/8632/167: minute by Hamilton, 24 November 1922

<sup>33</sup>Cab4/8: CID memorandum 381-B, 12 December 1922

could be a treaty of mutual guarantee in that region which did not involve Britain.

In January 1923 the Air Staff declared that they were unable to support the TMG. They argued that the process to decide the aggressor State was likely to result in delay before action could be taken and this would have a deleterious effect on that action. Further, the range of possible places in which action might have to be taken precluded the preparation of any plans, yet 'It is an accepted principle in war that operations without adequate preparation are foredoomed to failure'.<sup>34</sup> Air Commodore John Steel, now Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, also described the TMG as 'unreal' and wrote that 'it is a waste of effort spending very much time in thinking about it'. He had presumed, however, that the scheme should be treated seriously because Britain was a member of the League.<sup>35</sup> In the process of drawing up their memorandum the Air Staff had, therefore, avoided being entirely negative. Although they thought that the TMG was unlikely to produce any significant reduction in air armaments, they considered that it might create the conditions in which a disarmament process could be successful:

...it is possible that a scheme whereby the members of the League of Nations would bind themselves to take combined punitive action against any State guilty of aggression, whether by sea, land, or air, might act as a strong deterrent to would-be belligerents, and, by

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<sup>34</sup> Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: Air Staff memorandum, 'The Proposed Treaty of Mutual Guarantee', January 1923

<sup>35</sup> Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: 'Notes by the Air Staff on the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee and Regional Agreements proposed by the League of Nations', undated

lessening the risk of war, produce an atmosphere more favourable to proposals for general disarmament.<sup>36</sup>

The War Office formally responded to the TMG in February 1923 and its views were essentially the same as those which had been presented to Cecil by the General Staff and Worthington-Evans in the previous summer. In addition to their strictures against the continental limitation, the delay involved in identifying an aggressor and the impossibility of preparing plans to meet every conceivable act of aggression, the General Staff set out a number of other objections. They asserted that 'in the majority of cases' economic and financial blockade could not be operated effectively, that it was 'impossible for us to commit ourselves blindly to place British troops under the command of some foreign General Staff' and that the TMG was more likely to result in an increase rather than a decrease in armaments because States would be required to maintain elements of their forces for use by the League. They also stated that it was not possible to conclude such a Treaty until agreement had been reached on the means by which armaments could be compared.<sup>37</sup>

Charles Orde, a Foreign Office Clerk in the Western Department, was right to describe these criticisms of Cecil's scheme as 'captious & question-begging'.<sup>38</sup> The tone of the General Staff memorandum was entirely hostile to the TMG and there was no attempt to see positive aspects in the proposals or suggest ways in which they might be improved. The argument that the TMG would involve an increase rather than a decrease in armaments was especially tendentious. Article 25(b) of the TMG stated that countries which were the

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Cab4/8: CID memorandum 395-B, February 1923.

<sup>38</sup>FO371/9418: minute by Orde, 5 February 1923

victims of aggression would only be entitled to receive assistance if they had reduced their armaments in accordance with the plan agreed by the League or had taken steps to ensure that such reduction was carried out within two years of the Treaty being ratified. The implementation of such an arms reduction plan would inevitably have contributed to the creation of a more peaceful international environment and made aggressive military action by any Power more difficult. Such action would, in any case, have to be carried out at a much lower level. Further, the existence of the TMG would be likely to deter potential aggressors and thereby reduce the risk of war.

In the same month as the General Staff submitted their criticisms of the TMG to the CID, Cecil formally set out his scheme at the second meeting of the 6th session of the TMC on 10 February. During the course of his presentation he pointed out that the draft Treaty 'does not touch the real question of reduction of armaments neither does it propose any scale of reduction'. Cecil considered it, instead, to be 'a step forward towards the moral disarmament which is the essential preliminary for an agreement as to the scale of armaments which is to be maintained by the nations of the world.'<sup>39</sup> This was a clear recognition that the TMG was an attempt to achieve disarmament through the indirect rather than the direct method. Despite this the TMC decided that the TMG should be subjected to technical examination. It was referred, therefore, to the PAC which met for its 10th session on 16 April.

The British Government's preparations for this meeting were dilatory and unco-ordinated. On 11 April the CID considered the question of the instructions which should be given to the British representatives on the PAC. Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, was not present at the meeting as he was abroad and the

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<sup>39</sup>Adm116/2184: Limitation of Naval Armaments, 1922-23

views of the Foreign Office were made known only shortly before the meeting. As a result, the CID did not make any decision or recommendation on the application of the principles contained in the League Assembly's Resolution XIV. The British representatives on the PAC were instructed, therefore, to confine the discussion to an explanation of the practical difficulties which had been set out by the Service Departments in their memoranda.<sup>40</sup> When the PAC met, however, it discussed both Resolution XIV and Cecil's TMG, despite the objections of the British representatives.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast with the British Government's failure to provide their representatives on the PAC with clear instructions, the French delegation was extremely well prepared. At the end of March they produced a detailed technical assessment of Resolution XIV and the TMG. While the concern of the principal British decision-makers was to minimize their commitments, the concern of the French was to maximise their security. The French had serious doubts about the nature of the assistance which would be provided under a general treaty of guarantee because there would be a large number of Powers with very different national interests. If the guarantees could not be clearly defined, it would be logically impossible to reduce armaments in proportion to these guarantees. A further problem from the French perspective, and one which they shared with the British General Staff, stemmed from the fact that it was not practical to draw up plans of mutual assistance to meet all possible cases of aggression. This meant that the treaty would be unable to meet its own objective of providing assistance which was both immediate and effective. The French argued that these uncertainties would present serious obstacles to arms reduction under a general

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<sup>40</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 420-B, May 1923

<sup>41</sup>Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: report by Lt.-Col. S.J. Lowe, Britain's military representative at the League of Nations, 3 May 1923

treaty because if States were to provide assistance, they would have to maintain armaments at a minimum allowing them to do so. It would be practically impossible, however, to determine what this minimum should be and this in turn would make it impossible to ensure that States did not build excessive armaments.<sup>42</sup>

These objections pushed the French towards a rejection of a general treaty and advocacy of partial treaties which would offer to States 'assistance *capable of being measured*'.<sup>43</sup> This meant, the French argued, that it would be possible under such treaties to put into operation arms reduction proportionate to the definite guarantees provided by such treaties. Partial treaties also had an advantage which was of crucial importance to the French. While a general treaty could offer States a final victory against an aggressor but could not protect them from invasion, partial treaties could provide protection against invasion because the assistance offered would form the subject of a pre-arranged plan and would, therefore, be both immediate and effective. The French accepted that partial treaties would be open, that is, registered with and publicized by the League but they wanted conditions laid down for the admission of any new State and specified that such admission would have to be unanimously approved by the existing signatories.<sup>44</sup>

Differences of opinion within the PAC concerning the application of the principles contained in Resolution XIV prevented agreement on this subject. The note prepared by the French delegation was taken as the basis of discussion but the Spanish, later supported by the Italians and Japanese, disagreed with the French view that, if a treaty of mutual guarantee were to be of any use, it had to

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<sup>42</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 417-B, April 1923

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. Italics original

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

prevent aggression and invasion. The Spanish considered that this was impossible and they argued that a guarantee treaty would be of benefit if it ensured that an aggressor would ultimately be defeated.<sup>45</sup> As regards Cecil's TMG, however, the PAC unanimously concluded that it did not provide a sound basis on which to build an arms limitation scheme and argued in favour of partial treaties. This was not surprising because the head of the French delegation, Réquin, was also the President of the PAC and the memorandum which the British General Staff had prepared on Cecil's scheme for the CID was taken by the PAC's Military Sub-Commission as the basis for its discussions.<sup>46</sup>

The TMG was examined shortly afterwards by a special sub-committee of the TMC which met in London, under Cecil's chairmanship, from 14-17 May. This sub-committee, having taken note of the PAC's report, subjected the TMG to a clause by clause analysis. As a result of this process, there were alterations to the TMG and reservations by some members of the sub-committee. There were also declarations by some members and in one such declaration Cecil criticised the PAC report for favouring a system of partial treaties and for stating that arms reduction should follow the conclusion of such treaties:

To me it seems that any such plan is a mere reversion to the old system of group alliances leading to competitive armaments, and so far from producing any reduction of armament[sic] would plunge the world back into exactly that state of things as that which ultimately resulted in the World War. Moreover, it does not appear to me that

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<sup>45</sup>Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: Report by Lowe, 3 May 1923

<sup>46</sup>Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: Opinion of the PAC concerning Cecil's TMG, 21 April 1923

the proposal does in any respect carry out the principles of Resolution 14, or indeed, of Article 8 of the Covenant.<sup>47</sup>

Cecil was prepared, however, to support the PAC's idea of combining partial agreements with general obligations and he urged those who were unhappy with his scheme to put forward an alternative proposal which would conform to the principles of Resolution XIV and provide for arms reduction.<sup>48</sup>

Cecil recognized that international discussion and co-operation were integral parts of disarmament and he was determined to do all he could to retain French involvement in this process. In the summer of 1923, therefore, he followed up his declaration in the report of the special sub-committee of the TMC by encouraging the French members of the TMC to produce an alternative to his scheme.<sup>49</sup> As a result, Réquin submitted to the TMC a draft Convention of Mutual Assistance which sought to combine partial agreements with general obligations, as the PAC's report on the TMG had suggested.<sup>50</sup> The PAC considered the draft Convention on 5 July at the first plenary meeting of its 11th session which was held in Geneva. Opinion on the scheme was divided. Five delegations, those of Belgium, Brazil, Britain, France and Sweden, considered that it offered 'a hopeful basis for the elaboration of a scheme of mutual assistance leading to a reduction of armaments'.<sup>51</sup> The Italian, Japanese and Spanish delegations, however, expressed opposition to the idea of partial treaties which, they believed, would lead to military coalitions and so make arms

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<sup>47</sup>Air2/234/S21484/Part 1: Report of the Special Sub-Commission of the TMC relating to Draft TMG presented by Lord Robert Cecil, 16 May 1923

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51103, memorandum by Cecil, 11 December 1924 - see also Cab4/12: CID memorandum 547-B, 11 December 1924

<sup>50</sup>See Appendix 4 for the text of Réquin's draft Convention of Mutual Assistance

<sup>51</sup>Air2/234/S21484 Part II: PAC report, 7 July 1923



reduction all the more difficult to achieve.<sup>52</sup> The task of attempting to reconcile the Cecil and Réquin schemes was left to the 8th session of the TMC in August 1923.<sup>53</sup>

Prior to this meeting of the TMC there were Governmental changes in Britain. The Prime Minister, Bonar Law, resigned because of ill-health and was replaced on 21 May by Stanley Baldwin. He brought Cecil into the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal with special responsibility for League affairs. This meant that Cecil now had an opportunity to answer critics of his scheme within the British Government directly and generate greater understanding of the importance of disarmament in defence and foreign policy. His position as both a non-official member of the TMC and one of the Government representatives at the League was invidious and, as has previously been discussed, caused problems within the Foreign Office.

On 29 June, just one month after Cecil joined the Government, the CID held its first serious discussion of the TMG. Before it were important memoranda by Hankey and Cecil. It is not clear who, if anyone, authorized Hankey to submit a memorandum but he had a strong interest in defence matters and a powerful position as Secretary to both the Cabinet and CID. Hankey sought to suggest that he supported the underlying principles of Cecil's TMG but his detailed arguments against it, many of which were specious, revealed little understanding of disarmament, as defined in this thesis. He stated that Britain, having signed the League Covenant, was committed in principle to arms limitation and, for this reason, could not reject the principle of a general Treaty of Mutual Guarantee out of hand. In his opinion such a Treaty also offered considerable advantages to Britain because it had 'already carried reduction of

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Air2/234/S21484 Part II: Report by Lowe, 14 August 1923

armaments to considerable lengths' and stood 'to gain from anything which induces other nations to reduce their armaments'.<sup>54</sup> He saw this feature of the TMG as more important than the guarantee of mutual assistance which would follow an internationally agreed arms reduction plan. With British forces 'already reduced to the minimum consistent with our national security, we ought to gain from the fact our possible rivals, whose forces are not so reduced, would probably have to diminish their forces relatively to our own'.<sup>55</sup> British arms reduction since the end of the Great War had been driven by considerations of internal policy and Hankey clearly saw the TMG as a means by which the armaments balance might be made more favourable to Britain. His subsequent arguments revealed that this concern was not matched by a commitment to the international control and limitation of armaments as a foreign policy objective. Hankey was interested only in the product element of disarmament and not in its aims and process.

In April 1923 the Foreign Office's Historical Adviser, James Headlam-Morley, argued that treaties of guarantee based on defensive alliances had proved to be effective. He held that Cecil's TMG was effectively just such an alliance, characterized by the fact that it was intended to be permanent, although it would at first be limited to fifteen years, rather than being limited to a specific period of time, as had always previously applied with such treaties. This aspect of the TMG, he argued, offered a significant advantage:

In the past diplomatists have always been privately considering whether the time has not come for a change of alliances, and have even deliberately been working towards this end. This element of

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<sup>54</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 420-B, May 1923

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

uncertainty would be eliminated and the longer the alliance existed, the more probable is it that an atmosphere favourable to its own continuance would be created.<sup>56</sup>

Hankey, by contrast, was sceptical about treaties of guarantee in general and cited recent instances in which, he claimed, countries had avoided their obligations under such treaties: Italy and the Triple Alliance in 1914 and the Franco-Italian refusal to co-operate with the British forces at Chanak and Ismid in autumn 1922.<sup>57</sup> The Cabinet Secretary was, however, being deliberately misleading. In 1914 the Italians had taken advantage of a clause in their alliance Treaty with Germany and Austria-Hungary to abstain from action and there was no treaty binding the French and Italians to support Britain at Chanak.

In his comments on other aspects of Cecil's TMG, Hankey was similarly disingenuous. He argued that in military affairs Britain had to ensure the security of India and the Persian oil fields. The principal threat, the Soviet Union, had apparently been removed but there could be a revival of Soviet power and in such a situation Hankey did not believe that any British Government could entrust the security of these regions to a guarantee from Powers which had no interests in India or Persia. There was, however, no proposal in the TMG that Britain should do this and to suggest otherwise was a deliberate misreading of the Treaty. Hankey also stated that Cecil's proposals would restrict the defence flexibility on which British Governments had previously relied. This was because, under the TMG, each State would be allowed forces of a certain number and strength. If another State considered that a Power was exceeding the armaments permitted, it could appeal to the Secretary-General of the League

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<sup>56</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 416-B, 19 March 1923

<sup>57</sup>Cab4/9: CID memorandum 420-B, May 1923

who would then summon a meeting of the Council. If three quarters of its members agreed that the accused State had exceeded its armaments allocation, the Council would require that Government to take appropriate action to come within the scope of the Treaty within six months. Failure to do so could result in a trade and financial boycott being imposed upon the recalcitrant Power. The problem for Britain with such an arrangement was that it maintained its military forces at a low level and only increased them in order to meet particular emergencies. As examples of this policy Hankey offered the raising of a defence force during the industrial crisis of 1921 and the formation of the Black and Tans for service in Ireland in May 1920. The idea, put forward by Hankey, that under the TMG this might result in Britain being subjected to financial and economic sanctions was hardly credible.<sup>58</sup>

Hankey's concerns regarding the identification of an aggressor State and the action to be taken against such a State were more convincing. He echoed the War Office in stating that the four days' delay in determining an aggressor State could give it a crucial advantage. More importantly, once the Council had decided which was the aggressor State, Britain would have to provide forces for offensive action against this State. This would be an unlimited commitment which, Hankey argued, appeared 'to render somewhat illusory the apparent limitation of the commitment to an agreed proportion (one quarter) of a state's naval and air forces'.<sup>59</sup> If limitation of liability was practically impossible, the question of military plans to deal with aggression was also problematic and Hankey was notably dismissive of the procedures envisaged by Cecil:

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

The spectacle of the appropriate organ of the League meeting week after week and month after month to prepare elaborate international plans of war against Russia one day, Germany another, France a third, and Great Britain a fourth, and the tactful withdrawal of the member to be planned against, is one which it is difficult to envisage seriously. Yet without such plans there would be nothing but muddle and disaster when the day came.<sup>60</sup>

Hankey considered that this day was likely to come sooner and more often for Britain than any other Power because its Empire extended to every continent. Such an extension of Britain's military commitments meant that for Hankey a general Treaty of Mutual Guarantee was unacceptable in 1923. Although he supported the agreement of partial treaties of mutual guarantee, the tone of this memorandum indicated that Hankey had little time for disarmament by the indirect method through negotiation at the League of Nations.

Cecil responded quickly to Hankey's analysis producing a memorandum for the CID on 15 June 1923. Despite the PAC's rejection of his Treaty, he was optimistic that final agreement on it could be reached once a number of details had been adjusted. As regards Hankey's comments, Cecil immediately recognized the validity of the criticism that the draft Treaty entailed large and indefinite commitments. He was determined, however, that this objection should not be exaggerated. His scheme would be operative in the first instance for only fifteen years and the British Government would, therefore, be able to escape from its commitments if it had not achieved 'the objects for which it was made, namely, a general reduction of armaments based on a secure peace'.<sup>61</sup> If these

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Cab4/10: CID memorandum 431-B, 15 June 1923

objects were achieved, it followed that the commitments under the draft Treaty would present the British Government with no problems. During the fifteen years when the Treaty would be operative, Britain's commitments would be extended in two ways. By the League Covenant, Britain was already committed under Article 16 to the imposition of a blockade against an aggressor State. Under Cecil's TMG it would also be committed to military action at the request of a three quarters majority of the League Council. The guarantee and hence the military action would only come into force, however, after arms reduction had been effected. The chance of aggression would, therefore, be significantly reduced. Cecil was unwilling to attach too much importance to Britain's being bound by a three quarters majority on the Council. This was because there were ten States represented on the Council so Britain would require the support of only two other States to avoid being over-ruled.<sup>62</sup>

In further support of a Treaty of Guarantee, Cecil argued that in any serious breach of the peace involving the great Powers, Britain was bound to be involved but if such a Treaty were in force, the likelihood of its having to fight with few or no allies was significantly reduced. He recognized that the preparation of detailed military plans to deal with every possible outbreak of hostilities was impossible but this did not mean that nothing of value could be done to provide for action under a general Treaty. The allocation of fixed proportions of naval and military forces, together with prearranged plans for unity of command, would make the draft Treaty more effective. Cecil also believed that the four days' delay between the outbreak of hostilities and a decision by the Council identifying the aggressor was of less danger in practice than in theory. Any State taking aggressive action under the draft Treaty would

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<sup>62</sup>Tbid.

be trading a short term military advantage for the certainty of an ultimately crushing defeat. It is quite clear that for Cecil the very existence of the TMG made it less likely that the signatory Powers would have to fulfil their obligations under it. It was for this reason that Cecil regarded the TMG as an essential contribution to the achievement of long term peace: no State would be able to engage in aggressive action with the slightest prospect of success. At the very heart of the TMG lay a basic commitment to disarmament. Cecil did not shrink from this: for him disarmament was of such importance that he was ready to increase Britain's obligations in order to achieve it. He had no doubt that the prospects for British and international security would be enhanced by a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee which was based on disarmament.<sup>63</sup>

When the CID finally conducted a serious discussion of the question of treaties of mutual guarantee on 29 June 1923 there was, inevitably, a clash between those who were fundamentally opposed to the internationalism which such proposals represented and those who considered that it was essential to consider all suggestions to bring about general disarmament. Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, and Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty, were very firmly in the first of these groups. Curzon was not even prepared to accept the relatively uncontentious point which Hankey had set out at the start of his memorandum, namely, that Britain was in favour of general disarmament. Amery held that in signing any treaty of guarantee the 'country would enter into commitments which would be out of all proportion to the advantages which we should gain'.<sup>64</sup> Amery was as unhappy about partial treaties as he was about general treaties: the inevitable tendency of both would be to draw Britain into conflicts on the European continent. For Amery the British Empire provided all the mutual

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Cab2/3: CID minutes, 29 June 1923

support that was necessary. Curzon was broadly in favour of the views expressed by Amery. Although he could see the economic value of some form of partial arms limitation, he held that the situation in Europe was too dangerous for Britain to entertain further arms reduction. Curzon also claimed that public opinion had to be taken into account. Here he meant the House of Commons which, in his view, would never 'agree to sending our reduced forces on some expedition on the Continent of Europe - say, in Bulgaria - in support of a cause which was not of vital interest to this country'.<sup>65</sup> Curzon was apparently unaware that these statements were contradictory: if Britain were not prepared to become involved on the continent there was no reason why it should not reduce its military forces still further. He also argued that partial treaties of the type proposed by the French delegation on the PAC were no different from the system of alliances which had caused the Great War:

...if a Treaty of Partial Guarantee was undertaken by a group consisting of England, France, Italy and Belgium, such a course would immediately throw Germany into the arms of Russia and possibly of Turkey, which would result in exactly the same sort of group alliances as existed prior to the late war.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast to Curzon and Amery, the Secretary of State for Air, Samuel Hoare, believed that Britain, as a member of the League, had to give the proposals serious consideration for if the country were not 'prepared to take such a step how could it be possible to hope for any reduction in armaments in the future?'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.



Cecil, of course, challenged the very basis of the views put forward by Curzon and Amery. He pointed out that under Article VIII of the League Covenant, Britain 'had entered into a solemn obligation to formulate a plan for the general reduction of armaments'.<sup>68</sup> Economic considerations demanded that any such plan should be given serious consideration before being rejected and, as far as public opinion was concerned, Cecil argued that 'if the Government were to announce that they were unable to support a scheme for the limitation of armaments, they would not only be defeated in the House of Commons, but also be defeated at the next General Election'.<sup>69</sup> This indecisive meeting of the CID closed with Salisbury offering the pious hope that the League might be able to solve the problem.

In the days after this CID meeting there was an exchange of views regarding the TMG between Cavan, the CIGS, Derby, the Secretary of State for War, and Salisbury, Chairman of the CID. Cavan wrote to Derby that treaties of mutual guarantee, whether general or partial, were unworkable because 'It is impossible to visualize any State reducing its armaments on the illusory promise of assistance from other States'. He wanted, however, to avoid rejecting the idea without proposing an alternative. He suggested, therefore, 'a Treaty to Withhold and not to Give assistance'. This Treaty was based on the idea that a State would not be able to fight a war without some aid from other Powers. Cavan envisaged a situation in which the League would designate a State to be in the wrong and all the other States would then guarantee not to assist the aggressor. Cavan believed that the key advantage of his scheme was that it would be less expensive for the guarantor Powers than Cecil's scheme. He failed, however, to

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

explain how such a scheme would induce any State to carry out a policy of arms reduction.<sup>70</sup>

Derby set out his thinking in a memorandum which expressed no opinion concerning Cavan's proposal but revealed some support for Cecil's scheme. He agreed that a general guarantee and arms reduction were inextricably linked on the ground that 'a general guarantee would be of no advantage unless it was followed by a reduction of armaments and therefore expenditure'. If the guarantee were to be of sufficient value to result in arms reduction, Derby believed that it was essential to specify the amount of assistance which was to be given. This, however, would involve extending Britain's commitments and Derby supported the General Staff view that this would involve an increase rather than a decrease in the size of the British Army.<sup>71</sup>

Derby sent both his own memorandum and Cavan's idea to Salisbury for his consideration. Salisbury did not think that Cavan's scheme was a significant improvement on the League Covenant but he had no proposals of his own to put forward. He did, however, think that it would be wise to support further negotiations at the League for these could do no harm and would avoid Britain being accused of taking a *non possumus* approach. He was acutely aware that the major area of international tension was in Europe and that this could only be resolved by a disarmament process based on a security agreement. Failure to achieve such an agreement would be very dangerous:

Personally I take a very moderate view about this subject...But I really do not believe we shall get through even the present crisis in Europe without some mutual engagement of security as between

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<sup>70</sup>WO137/6: Cavan to Derby, 30 June 1923. Underlining original

<sup>71</sup>WO137/6: memorandum by Derby, 2 July 1923

France and ourselves and certain other Powers. And one problem is how to bring this about without calling into being again the old system of European groups opposed to each other, which, instead of ending in a limitation of armaments is quite as likely to end in their increase.<sup>72</sup>

This assessment corresponded closely to that of his brother, but Cecil placed a greater emphasis on the importance of disarmament. The memorandum which he submitted to the CID on 15 June had first been sent to Curzon and at that stage it had a different opening paragraph which began with the arresting observation that 'It is as useless to expect most military and naval experts to be in favour of disarmament as it is to expect cobblers to be opposed to the use of leather.' Cecil wanted the Cabinet to accept arms limitation as their policy and to 'instruct their naval and military advisers to devote their energies to the formulation of a scheme for that purpose'.<sup>73</sup>

In mid-1923, however, Cecil had little cause for optimism. There was no suggestion that the British Government would be prepared to adopt the TMG and the PAC had already rejected his scheme. Official opinion within the Foreign Office was especially hostile to the TMG. Gerald Villiers, head of the Western Department, had previously described Cecil's proposals as 'Utopian in theory and unworkable in practice' and in May he expressed his satisfaction at the PAC's opposition to the TMG.<sup>74</sup> Crowe had long held the view that disarmament was impractical and he considered that it was a waste of time and energy to seek to

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<sup>72</sup>WO137/6: Salisbury to Derby, 13 July 1923

<sup>73</sup>FO371/9419: memorandum by Cecil, 15 June 1923

<sup>74</sup>FO371/9418: minute by Villiers, 16 February 1923; FO371/9419: minute by Villiers, 1 May 1923

solve the complex problem of disarmament through the equally problematical method of a treaty of guarantee.<sup>75</sup>

When the TMC met in August for its 8th session, however, it adopted a much more positive approach to this task and succeeded in reconciling the mutual guarantee schemes proposed by Cecil and Réquin. The outcome was the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance (TMA).<sup>76</sup> This was largely made possible by the fact that 'the French shewed[sic] an unexpected spirit of conciliation which was without doubt engendered by their desire to arrive at an agreed text'.<sup>77</sup> There has been, however, considerable disagreement in judging both the TMC negotiations and the TMA which emerged. Wheeler-Bennett praised the TMC for combining the Cecil and Réquin drafts but Raffo has argued that Cecil was out-manoeuvred by Réquin with the result that the TMA conformed more closely to French ambitions.<sup>78</sup> Segrave also considered that the TMA more closely represented Réquin's views but Cecil, perhaps not surprisingly, claimed that it very closely resembled his own scheme.<sup>79</sup> Analysis of the draft schemes and the TMA indicates that Cecil was correct.

It is true that the League's TMA was in certain important respects quite different from the TMG. Réquin's scheme provided for partial agreements in the form of special defensive treaties, between two or more Powers, which had to be registered with the League. This was retained in the TMA which referred to them as complementary defensive agreements. The TMA also required unanimity on the Council, rather than the three quarters majority stipulated in the

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<sup>75</sup>FO800/243: memorandum by Crowe, 24 June 1923

<sup>76</sup>See Appendix 2 for the text of the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance.

<sup>77</sup>Air2/234/S21484 Part II: report by Lowe, 14 August 1923

<sup>78</sup>Wheeler-Bennett and Langermann, *op.cit.*, p.98 and Raffo, P.S. 'Lord Robert Cecil and the League of Nations', Liverpool University, Ph.D., 1967, p.189

<sup>79</sup>Adm116/222: minute by Segrave, 18 August 1923; Cecil Papers: ADD51103, memorandum by Cecil, 11 December 1924

TMG, when determining an aggressor or deciding whether a State had exceeded, in time of peace, the armaments it was to be allowed. In its essentials, however, the TMA represented a serious attempt to achieve disarmament in terms both of process and product. Whereas, under Réquin's scheme, the scale of arms reduction was to be determined by individual Governments and carried out only once they were satisfied that mutual assistance could be provided, the TMA retained the key element in Cecil's scheme: before any signatory Power received security guarantees, it had to commit itself to a League sponsored disarmament plan.

In her analysis of the TMA, Kitching appeared to misunderstand both Crowe's principal criticism of the TMG and the relationship between security and disarmament set out in the TMA. Crowe was convinced that a general scheme of arms reduction and limitation was itself impractical and that an attempt to achieve it by working out a treaty of general guarantee was, therefore, an exercise in 'putting the cart before the horse'.<sup>80</sup> Kitching considered that Crowe, in making this comment, was criticising the TMA, rightly, for requiring States to disarm before being entitled to the guarantee of assistance.<sup>81</sup> As the principal purpose of the TMA, however, was to achieve disarmament, it was wise to deny Powers the security guarantees provided by the TMA until they had, at least, begun the process of disarmament. At the Fifth League Assembly in 1924, Parmoor was equally determined that the security guarantees offered by the Geneva Protocol would not come into force until a plan for general disarmament had been achieved. Kitching, incorrectly, considered that

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<sup>80</sup>FO800/243: memorandum by Crowe, 24 June 1923

<sup>81</sup>Kitching, *op.cit.*, p.85

this was not the case as she praised the Protocol for putting the horse before the cart.<sup>82</sup>

The TMA, as approved by the TMC, was then submitted to the League Council at its meeting on 31 August. It was considered by the Fourth Assembly and then communicated to Governments for their observations. The very similarity between Cecil's original scheme and the TMA ensured that the opposition of the British Service Departments was maintained. In memoranda produced in October and November, the General Staff and the Air Staff restated their objections. The fact that the League Council could call upon specific States to provide forces for action against an aggressor, determine the forces which a State should put at the disposal of the League and both appoint and direct the overall commander for these forces was totally unacceptable. Both Staffs argued that arms reduction could only be achieved if the guarantee provided under the TMA was effective and this meant that assistance to the victim of aggression had to be immediate. This required appropriate plans to be prepared in advance and, as had been argued from the outset, this was impossible under a general treaty. This objection would not apply with the same force to partial treaties but the Air Staff argued that arms reduction could not be achieved until the disparity between the British and French Air Forces had been reduced significantly. It did not see how any partial treaty would be likely to affect this factor. The General Staff were convinced that the French saw partial treaties as the means by which Britain could be drawn into a military defensive alliance.<sup>83</sup>

In late October 1923 the Admiralty made clear that it held firmly to the position which it had set out in a Cabinet paper the previous July concerning the

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<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.85-86

<sup>83</sup>Cab4/10: CID memoranda, 464-B, November 1923 and 465-B, 10 October 1923

TMG.<sup>84</sup> It argued that the TMA would increase the country's naval commitments and therefore necessitate an increase rather than a decrease in Britain's naval forces and that the one-Power standard meant it was unacceptable to contemplate any reduction in the British Navy which would allow it to fall below the strength of another naval Power. The Admiralty, however, had not taken account of the fact that under the TMA, any arms reduction plan was to be based on information provided by the signatory States as to the reduction and limitation of arms which they considered proportionate to the security provided by the guarantee agreements. The Washington Treaty and the fact that the British Navy was likely to be a provider, rather than a consumer of security, meant that Britain would be able to argue convincingly that there should be no further reduction in its naval strength.

This continued opposition to the TMA from the Service Departments contributed to the considerable tension which existed in the Foreign Office in late November. The attitude of the Government's naval, military and air advisers made it almost certain that the Government would reject the TMA. This meant that, if Cecil were still the British representative at the 1924 League Assembly, he would not only have to oppose the scheme which he had played a large part producing, but also explain and defend British opposition to it. Curzon sent a memorandum to Cecil setting out these concerns and suggesting that the TMC should be dissolved.<sup>85</sup> Cecil replied the next day and argued both for the continuation of the TMC and for discussion of the TMA by the CID. He claimed, with some justification, that the TMA could contribute to a significant improvement in relations between the European Powers and re-stated his

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<sup>84</sup>FO371/9421: letter from Flint to the FO, 31 October 1923; Cab 24/161: CP311, Naval Staff memorandum, 3 July 1923

<sup>85</sup>FO371/9421: FO memorandum, 26 November 1923 and Curzon to Cecil, 27 November 1923

conviction that the Service Departments should be subordinate to the wider objectives of Britain's disarmament policy:

The Treaty of Mutual Assistance may be objectionable, but they [Britain's military and naval advisers] really have got to consider how they are to carry out their obligations under Article 8 of the Covenant in the first place; and in the second what steps we are to take to allay the international suspicion which at present is at the bottom of more than half our troubles. After all the French have a real grievance in the failure of the Americans to ratify the Tri-Partite Pact on the faith of which they abandoned their claim to the Rhine frontier and it surely makes any plan worth consideration if the principal military power in Europe regards it as a practical step towards disarmament. Any scheme of naval disarmament which we did not approve could be of no use; any scheme of military disarmament which the French do approve is worth consideration.<sup>86</sup>

The terms of both the TMG and the TMA provided for the separate ratification of the Treaty in the different continents of the world and many of Cecil's observations, including those to Curzon, indicate that his attention was focused primarily on Europe. Richardson argued that this feature of the TMA was its principal weakness because 'it endeavoured to impose regional security pacts on quasi-collective principles on regions where the objective conditions for the implementation of such pacts did not exist'.<sup>87</sup> It was certainly true that the TMA would be totally ineffective in both the Far East and on the American continent

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<sup>86</sup>FO371/9421: Cecil to Curzon, 28 November 1923

<sup>87</sup>Richardson, British disarmament policy, p.15



without the participation of the USA. In Europe, however, British and French participation was crucial and Britain could have tested France's commitment to military disarmament by adopting a positive approach to further negotiation of the draft Treaty in that continent. The future of the TMA was not, however, decided by the Conservative Administration because Baldwin contrived to lose the December 1923 General Election over the question of protection.

The advent of the first Labour Government did not, though, bring any change in the British attitude to the TMA. On 3 April 1924 it was discussed by the CID which concluded that the draft Treaty could not be recommended for adoption by the Government. In justification of this decision it set out all the objections which had previously been made by the Service Departments.<sup>88</sup> Cecil, now no longer a member of the Government but on close terms with MacDonald, wrote to the Prime Minister in June urging him to declare his Government's support for the principles of the TMA and continue discussion of the Treaty.<sup>89</sup> His efforts were in vain. On 30 May the Cabinet had already accepted the CID conclusions and agreed that MacDonald should write to the Secretary-General of the League making it clear that 'the British Government is definitely opposed in principle to the proposed Treaties of Mutual Assistance'.<sup>90</sup>

MacDonald's letter was sent to the League on 5 July and it set out the principal objections which had been made on many occasions within the British Government since Cecil first outlined his scheme two years before. It argued that the guarantee provided under the Treaty was not sufficiently sure to bring about arms reduction. This was because the TMA failed to provide a definition of aggression, it would be impossible to draw up pre-arranged plans to meet every

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<sup>88</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 3 April 1924

<sup>89</sup>Cecil Papers: ADD51081, Cecil to MacDonald, 23 June 1924

<sup>90</sup>Cab23/48: Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1924

possible case of aggression, and assistance to victims of aggression was dependent on the consent of the Power required to provide assistance. As Madariaga has written, it was paradoxical that the French should have sought to strengthen the military guarantees of the TMG only for the TMA to be rejected by the British Government 'on the ground that as a military instrument the Draft Treaty was not effective enough'.<sup>91</sup> This paradox was underlined by the fact that the Labour Government's view implied that more guarantees were required before disarmament could occur, even though such a view was strongly opposed by the majority of British decision-makers. MacDonald also claimed that the Treaty would require Britain to increase its Armed Forces, that the provision for the conclusion of partial treaties meant there was a danger of the old alliance system re-emerging and that there was an unacceptable increase in the powers of the Council. Although this rejection was couched in placatory tones - there was appreciation of the work of the League and the Government declared its support, in principle, for an international conference to devise a scheme for international disarmament - it was clear that there could be no further progress with this first attempt to achieve disarmament by the indirect method.<sup>92</sup>

Two months after its rejection of the TMA the Labour Government played a leading role in negotiating the second attempt to achieve disarmament by the indirect method, the Geneva Protocol, which was very similar to the TMA. In so doing it revealed a very serious degree of confusion in its foreign and disarmament policy. In the light of the Conservative Governments' opposition to the principles underlying the TMA there can be no doubt that it would have been rejected by Baldwin's second Administration in 1925 in just the

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<sup>91</sup>Madariaga, *Disarmament*, p. 121

<sup>92</sup>FO371/10568: MacDonald to Drummond, 5 July 1924

same way that the Protocol was rejected. MacDonald and his colleagues would, however, have served the cause of disarmament rather better had they declared their support for the principles of the TMA, sought amendment of the Treaty through the League and thereby tested the extent of French commitment to the process. Such an approach would also have enhanced the Administration's reputation in the sphere of international policy. Instead, it accepted Service Department and Foreign Office criticisms of the TMA and then proceeded, through the negotiation of the Protocol, to stimulate even more intense criticism from the very same Departments.

## Chapter 9 - The Geneva Protocol

The initial phase in the history of post-war disarmament came to an end with Britain's rejection of the Geneva Protocol in March 1925.<sup>1</sup> Although the Labour Government played a significant role in drawing up the Protocol, it was guilty of confused thinking over the question of disarmament. Cecil was right to assert that its decisions to reject the TMG and then support the Protocol were 'curiously inconsistent'.<sup>2</sup> The strong opposition to the Protocol within Baldwin's second Administration was, by contrast, entirely consistent with Conservative antipathy to the TMG in 1923. Austen Chamberlain's determined advocacy of a new approach to European security problems resulted in the Locarno Treaties of October 1925. This settlement separated the issue of security from that of arms reduction, tended to undermine the authority and prestige of the League and marked a return in Europe to the diplomatic methods which the League had been intended to replace. The pursuit of disarmament, as defined in this study, had received a severe blow.

On 30 May 1924 the Labour Cabinet finally decided that it could not accept the TMA but it wished to make it clear that it remained committed to the search for arms limitation. MacDonald and Parmoor were authorized, therefore, to write to the Secretary-General of the League stating that although the Government was opposed in principle to the TMA, it was in favour of an international conference on the limitation of armaments, 'whenever a favourable opportunity presents itself'.<sup>3</sup> The defeat of Poincaré's *Bloc National* in elections earlier that same month and the appointment as French Prime Minister of

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<sup>1</sup> See Noel-Baker, P.J. The Geneva Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes (London: King and Son, 1925), Annex VIII, pp.215-224, for the text of the Geneva Protocol

<sup>2</sup> Cab4/12: CID memorandum 547-B, 11 December 1924

<sup>3</sup> Cab23/48: Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1924.

Edouard Herriot, Radical Mayor of Lyons, made possible a significant improvement in Anglo-French relations. The two Prime Ministers held talks in London on 21-22 June and in Paris on 8-9 July and during these conversations MacDonald promised to discuss disarmament and security once the reparations issue had been resolved and also agreed to join Herriot in making an appearance at the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations in September. The London Conference of July-August dealt with reparations by means of the Dawes Plan and, although MacDonald doubted whether political conditions in Europe were favourable to disarmament, he nevertheless kept his promise and arrived in Geneva on 3 September.<sup>4</sup> Despite MacDonald's doubts, this Assembly produced the Geneva Protocol, the second plan which aimed to achieve disarmament by the indirect method.

MacDonald's lack of confidence in the prospects for disarmament and his preoccupation with the reparations issue almost certainly explain the fact that he arrived in Geneva without having made any preparations for the Assembly. It would appear that the speech which he made to the Assembly on 4 September was largely written the day before it was delivered. It was, nevertheless, of great significance for two reasons. First, no other British Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary had addressed the Assembly. Second, MacDonald argued that Germany should be admitted to the League of Nations and that a system of arbitration was required as a basis for a successful conference on arms reduction. Herriot addressed the Assembly on the following day and, although he supported MacDonald on the issues of arbitration and arms reduction, he argued that these were inextricably linked with security. For France, he asserted, arbitration without security would not be sufficient. There then followed Anglo-

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<sup>4</sup>Marquand, D. Ramsay MacDonald, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), pp.351-352.

French collaboration which, on 6 September, resulted in a resolution being presented to the Assembly inviting the First and Third Committees to consider the relationship between arbitration, security and disarmament and the possible amendment of those articles of the Covenant of the League which concerned the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>5</sup>

MacDonald then left Geneva to return to London. The work of drafting the Protocol was left to the British delegation headed by Lord Parmoor, Lord President of the Council and leader in the House of Lords, who had been given responsibility for League questions, and Arthur Henderson, the Home Secretary. The Third Commission was primarily responsible for the Protocol and the main burden of the work in the British delegation fell to Henderson.<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable that such an initiative should have been taken without any prior discussion within the Government and that the British delegates were given considerable independence when conducting the negotiations. This independence and the apparent tone of the discussions at Geneva rapidly produced disquiet within both the Admiralty and the Cabinet.

The Admiralty's concern was based on reports which had appeared in The Times on 15 and 16 September indicating that Parmoor had effectively offered the services of the Navy to the League. A letter was sent, therefore, to the Foreign Office inquiring into the accuracy of these reports.<sup>7</sup> The Foreign Office sought to ease Admiralty concerns by pointing out that the Press reports were exaggerated and providing information about the real position in the form of the telegraphic correspondence between Parmoor and MacDonald. This correspondence indicated that the British and French delegations were working

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp.352-353 and Northedge, The Troubled Giant, p.239

<sup>6</sup>Hamilton, M.A. Arthur Henderson (London: Heinemann, 1938), p.245

<sup>7</sup>Adm1/8671/215: Admiralty letter to the FO, 17 September 1924

on the assumption that aggression would be defined as a refusal to arbitrate or to accept an arbitral award. In the event of such an act of aggression being declared by the League, the two delegations agreed that the Council should call upon League members to put sanctions against the aggressor into operation immediately, as laid down in the first two paragraphs of Article 16 of the Covenant. It was the view of the British delegation that the proposed obligations did not go beyond Article 16 of the Covenant but that they would be advantageous in providing the French with '[a] more precise definition of [the] extent to which [the] obligations contained in article 16 will be met, and thus acting as [a] more powerful deterrent against aggression'.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time as the Admiralty sought this clarification from the Foreign Office about developments in Geneva, it also wrote to the British naval representative at the League, Rear Admiral Aubrey Smith, seeking his opinions on the discussions and asking him whether he had in any way been consulted about Parmoor's offer, as reported in the Press. On 20 September, Aubrey Smith replied with both a brief telegram and a more detailed letter. His replies, like that of the Foreign Office, should have eased the Admiralty's fears because he stated that the reports were based on misunderstandings of Parmoor's comments during Press interviews and that the proposals from the Third Committee, while they had the effect of making the obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant more precise, 'do not constitute any diminution of national sovereignty'. He also made the point that the Protocol, even when signed and ratified by the Government, would not come into effect unless the Arms Reduction Conference which was to meet in June 1925 was successful. Aubrey Smith did report, however, that although the Foreign Office was being kept fully informed about

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<sup>8</sup>FO letter to the Admiralty, 19 September 1924; telegraphic correspondence between Parmoor and MacDonald, 15-18 September 1924

the discussions at Geneva, he had not been consulted by Parmoor on any questions concerning the Protocol.<sup>9</sup>

Neither the Foreign Office nor Aubrey Smith succeeded in quelling the Admiralty's dissatisfaction with developments at Geneva and on 20 September the Foreign Office received another letter setting out the Admiralty's objections to what was to become Article 11 of the Protocol.<sup>10</sup> One week later the Admiralty view was further elaborated in a memorandum by the First Lord, Viscount Chelmsford.<sup>11</sup> The Admiralty view was that the economic measures envisaged under Article 16 of the Covenant could be put into effect by domestic action alone and did not involve the risk of naval operations being required.<sup>12</sup> The Protocol, however, required the signatory Powers 'to take all measures in their power to preserve the safety of communications by land and sea of the attacked or threatened State.'<sup>13</sup> Chelmsford asserted, entirely reasonably, that this was bound to involve naval action as this alone could protect a State's sea communications.<sup>14</sup> The Admiralty's view was that this would mean that the Navy was required to assume increased responsibilities which were not consistent with the one-Power standard and which would result in 'the gravest risks to the fleet on which the safety of the Empire depends'.<sup>15</sup>

The problem with this Admiralty argument against the Protocol was that it did not take account of the linkage between the security guarantees in the Protocol and the requirement for there to be disarmament before these

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<sup>9</sup>Adm1/8671/215: Admiralty letter to Aubrey Smith, 17 September 1924 and Aubrey Smith telegram to Admiralty, 20 September 1924; Adm116/2253: letter by Aubrey Smith to Admiralty, 20 September 1924.

<sup>10</sup>Adm116/2253: letter from Admiralty to FO, 20 September 1924.

<sup>11</sup>Cab24/170: CP456, 27 September 1924

<sup>12</sup>Adm116/2253: letter from Admiralty to FO, 20 September 1924.

<sup>13</sup>Noel-Baker, *The Geneva Protocol*, Article 11 of the Geneva Protocol, p.221

<sup>14</sup>Cab24/170: CP456, 27 September 1924

<sup>15</sup>Adm116/2253: letter from Admiralty to FO, 20 September 1924.



guarantees became operative. The French delegation had sought to ensure that the arbitration and sanctions elements of the Protocol would become operative immediately rather than having to wait on the agreement of a disarmament plan. On 18 and 19 September, however, the British delegation had argued strongly on the Third Committee that the other elements of the Protocol could not come into force until a disarmament agreement had been concluded. Parmoor stated that MacDonald, in his Assembly speech of 4 September, had stressed that arbitration and sanctions were to be steps towards the key objective of disarmament and the British delegation held firmly to this position. This 'great battle' was won when the French gave way.<sup>16</sup> As a result of this development neither Britain nor any other Power would have been required to take action against an aggressor until the arms reduction plan envisaged in Article 17 of the Protocol had been carried out. The implementation of such a plan would inevitably have contributed to the creation of a more peaceful international environment and made aggressive military action by any Power more difficult. In such a situation it was most unlikely that the British Navy would be exposed to unnecessary danger by having to take action under the Protocol. It was also true, as Parmoor himself has written, that under Article 11 'the Council was not empowered to prescribe the particular method which individual nations should follow'.<sup>17</sup> It was for each signatory Power to determine, in the light of its geographical position and military and naval power, what action it was able to take.

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<sup>16</sup>FO371/10570: summary of the Sixth Meeting of the Fourth Sub-Committee of the Third Committee, 18 September; minute by Orde, 23 September 1924; summary of the Sixth Meeting of the Fourth Sub-Committee of the Third Committee, 19 September 1924

<sup>17</sup>Parmoor, Baron A Retrospect - Looking back over a life of more than eighty years (London: Heinemann, 1936), p.238

The relationship between the Protocol and the arms reduction plan envisaged by it was analysed by David Hunter Miller in his contemporary assessment of the League's proposals. He stressed that the security guarantees offered by the Protocol were dependent upon Powers implementing a multi-lateral arms reduction scheme:

...the Protocol can come into force as a legal obligation only on the date of the adoption by the Conference of the Plan for the Reduction of Armaments; and from that date till the date when the Council of the League of Nations declares that the Plan has or has not been carried out, it may be said that the Protocol is only *provisionally* in force; it is subject to avoidance.<sup>18</sup>

The Protocol did not provide a definition of 'carried out' or state the time to be allowed for this process: these details were to be decided by the Arms Reduction Conference. There can be little doubt, however, that Miller was right to envisage that 'carried out' would mean the transformation of the arms reduction plan into 'a binding agreement'.<sup>19</sup> In this important respect there was no difference between the TMA and the Protocol. The TMA was more precise in that it stated that an agreed arms reduction plan had to be carried out within two years of its adoption but both schemes to achieve disarmament by the indirect method asserted the primacy of arms reduction.

Madariaga, another contemporary observer, considered that, during the period of MacDonald's administration, 'the military, naval and air "advisers" of

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<sup>18</sup>Miller, D.H. The Geneva Protocol, (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp.6-7.  
Italics original

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p.7

the British Government were never more powerful'.<sup>20</sup> During the period when the Protocol was being negotiated, however, the reverse appears to have been true. The Admiralty was sufficiently concerned at the British delegation's failure to consult with Aubrey Smith that it sent Dudley Pound to Geneva in order to put its case concerning the Protocol directly to Parmoor and Henderson. Pound arrived in Geneva on 28 September and his report indicates that Henderson was singularly unsympathetic to the Admiralty's concerns.<sup>21</sup>

At 4.00 p.m. on the day he arrived, Pound had an interview with the Home Secretary who took a very combative approach in response to suggested amendments to the Protocol. The Admiralty wanted changes in three areas. First, it wanted to ensure that the Navy had freedom of movement at all times, as long as that movement was not intended to further aggression. This was in response to Article 7 of the Protocol which stated that, in the event of a dispute arising between two States, States signatory to the Protocol agreed not to 'take any measures of military, naval, air, industrial or economic mobilizations, nor, in general, any action of a nature likely to extend the dispute or render it more acute'.<sup>22</sup> Second, it wished to ensure that in the event of war, no judicial body was given the power to alter or to criticize existing maritime law. Finally, it was concerned to ensure that the Navy was not required to take action to protect the communications of a threatened State, unless war was declared against the aggressor. This was a clear reference to Article 11 of the Protocol which Chelmsford had criticized in his Cabinet paper of 27 September. Henderson, however, asserted that the amendments proposed by the Admiralty had not been received in sufficient time for them to be considered before the Protocol was

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<sup>20</sup>Madariaga, Morning without Noon, p.53

<sup>21</sup>Adm1/8672/224: Director of Plans' Report on Visit to Geneva, 10 October 1924

<sup>22</sup>Noel-Baker, The Geneva Protocol, Article 7 of the Geneva Protocol, p.218

finally approved by the Third Committee on 27 September and that this was the Admiralty's own fault. Pound countered by asserting that the Admiralty had not received any drafts of the Protocol before 27 September.<sup>23</sup>

Following this exchange there was discussion of the changes that the Admiralty wished to introduce but Henderson held to his position that it was too late to re-open any of the articles of the Protocol to further discussion, that allowing forces to be moved whilst arbitration was in process would run counter to both the spirit of the Protocol and to the line taken by the French during its negotiation and that such changes were, in any case, 'contrary to the policy of the Prime Minister'.<sup>24</sup> Henderson's biographer provides a rather more dramatic description of the way in which the Home Secretary dealt with the Admiralty's representative but there can be no doubt that the British delegation was determined to adhere to the Protocol.<sup>25</sup> Pound had to be satisfied with Parmoor's speech at the Assembly during which he stated that it was unlikely that the Council of the League would regard as an infraction of Article 7 any movement of naval or air forces which occurred for the purposes of self-defence following a dispute.<sup>26</sup>

Tension between the Government and the Admiralty concerning the negotiation and the terms of the Geneva Protocol was reported in the Press and also prompted questions in the House of Commons. On 2 October Clynes, the Lord Privy Seal, took Prime Minister's questions and was asked by Curzon<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Adm1/8672/224: Director of Plans' Report on Visit to Geneva, 10 October 1924

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Hamilton, *op.cit.*, pp.249-250

<sup>26</sup>Adm1/8672/224: Director of Plans' Report on Visit to Geneva, 10 October 1924

<sup>27</sup>Francis Richard Henry Penn, Viscount Curzon, Conservative MP for Battersea South

'whether the Government have made any conditional promises with regard to the use of the British Navy?' In reply Clynes stated that he had no information on this matter other than that which had been reported in the Press and these reports he did not accept.<sup>28</sup> In the Foreign Office there was apparently ignorance as to the origins of these Press reports but the role of the Navy was quite clear :

The protocol imposes no special obligation on the British Navy, as such. The obligation, however, it may be interpreted, is shared by the naval and military forces of all the states which may sign the protocol, though in practice it will no doubt mean that the British Navy will be called upon more frequently than the naval and military forces of any other state.<sup>29</sup>

The controversy nevertheless continued and on 8 October the Prime Minister was asked in the Commons by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Assheton Pownall, Conservative MP for Lewisham East, if the British delegation at Geneva had made any commitments concerning the Navy. MacDonald replied that the Government would soon publish both the text of the Protocol and the reports to the Assembly of the First and Third Committees. He held that these papers would enable MPs to understand the nature and effects of the Protocol.<sup>30</sup> MacDonald was then asked by Commander Carlyon Bellairs, Conservative MP for Maidstone, if the Government had taken advice from the Admiralty. In the light of Pound's report, MacDonald's reply appeared disingenuous:

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<sup>28</sup>FO371/10571: extract from Hansard, 2 October 1924

<sup>29</sup>FO371/10571: minute by Campbell, 4 October 1924

<sup>30</sup>FO371/10571: extract from Hansard, 8 October 1924

That is so. As a matter of fact, before the agreements were come to, before the matter was finally passed on to the Assembly, a special representative was sent from the Admiralty. I do hope hon. Members will not take as gospel any of the extraordinary statements which appeared in the newspapers while the meetings were taking place.<sup>31</sup>

This reply prompted angry comments by the two most senior naval officers, Beatty and Vice Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff. Keyes wrote that 'The Prime Minister's reply to Com. Bellairs implies something which is not true!' and Beatty recorded that 'No steps were taken to obtain Admiralty advice. The Adty. took the initiative and forced their views on the F.O. and on the Delegates not with complete success'.<sup>32</sup>

There are those who have criticized MacDonald for dishonesty in his handling of other aspects of Government policy at this time.<sup>33</sup> It is likely that the Labour Administration's treatment of the Admiralty during the negotiation of the Protocol and MacDonald's attempt to gloss over what took place would have intensified the senior Service's already considerable opposition to this disarmament scheme. Whether or not this opposition would have been sufficiently strong to prevent the Government from signing the Protocol is not clear and has been a source of disagreement amongst historians. Orde has

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<sup>31</sup>Adm1/8672/224: Director of Plans' Report on Visit to Geneva, 10 October 1924; extract from Hansard, 8 October 1924

<sup>32</sup>Adm1/8672/224: Director of Plans' Report on Visit to Geneva, 10 October 1924; minutes by Keyes, 11 October and Beatty, 14 October 1924. Underlining original

<sup>33</sup>See Ellis, E.L. T.J. - A Life of Dr. Thomas Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp.269-276 and Roskill, S. Hankey - Man of Secrets vol II, 1919-1931 (London: Collins, 1972), pp.375-381. Ellis accused MacDonald of 'evasions, half-truths and bare-faced lying that left some of his Cabinet colleagues aghast' (p.273) over the Campbell case in 1924. This is supported by Roskill's account of the Campbell case.

argued that it would have been but Marquand considered that, although the Prime Minister's own view on the Protocol was not known, 'the high probability is that, when the battle over the Protocol began in earnest, MacDonald would have fought in its support'.<sup>34</sup> This was because MacDonald believed that disarmament was essential to the achievement of peace and that the French would not participate in a disarmament convention unless their security was assured. The Protocol was the price that would have to be paid for a disarmament agreement: if it brought peace to Europe it would be a small price. An additional point in support of the argument that MacDonald would have supported the Protocol is that it emerged from a League of Nations resolution which he had moved at the Assembly.<sup>35</sup>

Early in October, MacDonald also received advice from the British Ambassador to France, the Marquess of Crewe, who considered that the Protocol was encouraging French opinion to take a more favourable view of security, arbitration and disarmament. Crewe reminded the Prime Minister that Herriot, in the previous August, had stated that France required three guarantees of its security, supplementary to those provided by the Versailles Treaty, if it were to support the Allied military occupation of the Rhineland being brought to an end. The first of these supplementary guarantees should be a defensive pact between Britain and France to replace the 1919 Treaty which was abandoned when the USA withdrew from it. There should also be defensive pacts between the Allies which had borders with Germany and non-aggression pacts, safeguarded by the League, between these Powers and Germany. Finally, there should be a treaty of mutual assistance to protect States against aggression.

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<sup>34</sup>Orde, A. Great Britain and International Security 1920-1926 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p.69 and Marquand, op.cit., p.356

<sup>35</sup>Marquand, op.cit., p.356

Crewe took the view that if the Geneva Protocol were put into force and included Germany, Herriot's supplementary guarantees would be provided, except for the defensive pacts between Britain, France and the Allies neighbouring on Germany. From the point of view of disarmament, Crewe believed that there were three important factors which would encourage the French Government to make concessions, if the Geneva Protocol were accepted. First, French finances would be strengthened if spending on armaments could be reduced. Second, if France did reduce its expenditure on armaments, it was thought that the British and American Governments would moderate their attitudes concerning the country's war debts. Third, the French had much to lose concerning security if they rejected the Protocol:

There would...I am convinced, amongst all thinking people here, be a very real reluctance, in the face of the relative strengths of the French and German populations, lightly to abandon, as a result of failure to come to an agreement with Great Britain at a disarmament conference, the new guarantees of security which under the terms of the protocol now at last appear to be so nearly within the grasp of France.<sup>36</sup>

If Crewe's assessment of French opinion regarding the Protocol were correct there was a strong case for the Labour Government, had it remained in power rather than falling over the matter of the Campbell Case, signing and ratifying the Protocol. Herriot's desire for a defensive pact, in addition to the Protocol, would certainly have met strong opposition in Britain. The British

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<sup>36</sup>FO371/10571: telegram from Crewe to MacDonald, 6 October 1924



Government would, however, have had a powerful position from which to negotiate with the French on this issue. It is unlikely that the French would have been willing to give up the advantages which the Protocol provided because Britain refused to enter into an additional defensive pact with them. French support for the Protocol was confirmed by the fact that its Government laid before the Chamber of Deputies on 28 November two bills proposing the ratification of the Protocol and the recognition of the obligatory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice.<sup>37</sup>

By this time, however, the future of the Protocol, as far as Britain was concerned, would be decided by Baldwin's second Administration which was appointed following the Conservatives' victory in the November 1924 General Election. Conservative hostility to general treaties providing for security and disarmament had been revealed during 1922-23 when the proposals put forward by Cecil and Réquin had resulted in the TMA. It was, therefore, most unlikely that the Protocol would receive much support within the Government. The only member of the Cabinet in favour of disarmament through the League was Cecil, who was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with responsibility for League affairs. He lost no time in trying to persuade the new Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, that the Government should adopt a favourable attitude to the Protocol. In a letter of 17 November he made it clear that, while he would have preferred the League to have continued with its examination of the TMA, he considered that the Protocol was beneficial to Britain. This was because, in Cecil's opinion, Britain would eventually find herself involved in an arms race if a general disarmament agreement were not achieved. The Protocol offered the

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<sup>37</sup>FO371/10572: Crewe to Austen Chamberlain, 1 December 1924

means by which such an arms race might be avoided and Britain's military and naval position might be strengthened:

It would be a real relief to us if we could induce the French to reduce their air force, and agree to some limitation of submarines and perhaps cruisers also. Indeed since armed strength is a relative matter and we have greatly cut down our armaments particularly on land it is clear that the more we can do to induce other nations to follow our example the greater becomes our effective military power.<sup>38</sup>

Cecil attached so much importance to the Protocol that he believed it should be considered by a special committee comprising Dominion representatives and political figures drawn from across the political spectrum. In a subsequent letter he suggested that Balfour, Grey, Lloyd George and MacDonald should be invited to serve on this committee.<sup>39</sup>

In a letter which he wrote to Baldwin on 25 November concerning the procedures by which the Government was to consider the Protocol, Chamberlain revealed a willingness to respond positively to Cecil's suggestion concerning a special committee. It had already been decided that the initial discussion should take place within the CID but Chamberlain then wanted a special political sub-committee to be appointed 'to decide the fundamental political issues which are absolutely of the first consequence in determining our relations with the rest of the world'. He advised the Prime Minister to invite Balfour, Haldane and Grey to join this sub-committee so that it would be possible to arrive at a genuinely

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<sup>38</sup>FO800/256: Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, 17 November 1924

<sup>39</sup>FO800/256: Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, 21 November 1924

national policy regarding the Protocol.<sup>40</sup> Chamberlain was less convinced, however, about the merits of the Protocol itself. Although the French strongly favoured a League guarantee of the type offered by the Protocol, Chamberlain did not think that they would regard it as a substitute for mutual defence treaties. He anticipated, therefore, that if Britain did accept the Protocol, he would immediately receive from France and Belgium a demand to supplement the Protocol with a tripartite treaty.<sup>41</sup>

At this early stage in the life of Baldwin's second Administration, Chamberlain's thinking was in what he described as 'a very fluid condition'.<sup>42</sup> Amongst his Foreign Office advisers, however, strong opposition to the Protocol was already being put forward. The most powerful voice against the Protocol was, unsurprisingly, that of Crowe who argued that its provisions ran counter to 'the real world of facts'.<sup>43</sup> For this self-styled realist there were three features of the Protocol which were particularly objectionable. First, under Article 3 of the Protocol the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice was made compulsory in disputes which involved the interpretation of a treaty, any question of international law, the existence of any fact which, if established would constitute a breach of an international obligation and the nature and extent of the reparation to be made for breaking an international obligation. In October 1920 the Cabinet had rejected the principle of compulsory arbitration and Crowe held that nothing had occurred since then which counteracted that decision.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>FO800/256 and AC51/21: Austen Chamberlain to Baldwin, 25 November 1924

<sup>41</sup>FO800/256: Austen Chamberlain to Cecil, 19 November 1924

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Cab4/12 and FO371/10571: minute by Crowe, 17 November 1924

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

The effect of Article 4 of the Protocol intensified Crowe's opposition to the principle of arbitration which was such an important element of the agreement. This article stated that if the Powers involved in a dispute refused to accept arbitration, the League Council could, if in unanimous agreement, impose a settlement or, if there were not unanimity, refer the dispute to arbitrators of its choosing whose arbitral award would be binding. Crowe considered that this was 'an important and far-reaching innovation' which went significantly beyond the scope of Article 11 of the Covenant of the League. In this he was indisputably correct because Article 11 merely stated that in the event of war or the threat of war 'the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise or effectual to safeguard the peace of nations'.<sup>45</sup> By departing so significantly from the flexibility which Crowe thought was such an admirable feature of this article of the Covenant, the framers of the Protocol were, in his opinion endangering the Covenant rather than strengthening it. This was because countries might be faced with the possibility of an arbitral award going against them on a matter which they considered to be of supreme national importance. In such a situation Crowe thought it more likely that a Power would repudiate its engagement with the League rather than face an adverse arbitral award:

There are issues so deeply interwoven with national history, tradition and sentiment that no foreign tribunal can be trusted truly to understand and appreciate what is at stake.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, 28 June 1919, Cmd.153 of 1919

<sup>46</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 538-B and FO371/10571: minute by Crowe, 17 November 1924

This concern for the survival of the League was, however, disingenuous because in the same minute Crowe questioned the whole process by which the Covenant had been drawn up. He claimed that Government Departments had not been given an opportunity to consider the draft of the Covenant with the result that it became known to them only in its final form, 'like Minerva sprung completely equipped from the head of Jupiter'.<sup>47</sup>

Crowe was right, however, to criticize the Protocol in terms of its likely effect on the USA's perception of the League. He pointed out that the USA had been unprepared to join the League with a Covenant which provided a considerable degree of flexibility as far as the application of economic sanctions was concerned. It was reasonable, therefore, to argue that they would be less likely to join in the future if the application of these sanctions were made more rigid by acceptance of the Protocol. Further, Britain had signed the Covenant not expecting that the USA would repudiate it. This repudiation had, of course, changed the context of post-war international relations and for Crowe this justified any British reluctance to fulfil its obligations as a League member. It followed logically from this view, as far as Crowe was concerned, that, if there were to be amendment of the Covenant, it should be in the direction of limiting British commitments regarding economic sanctions. He took the same view on the matter of the employment of military, naval and air forces. Here the Protocol also tightened up the obligations which applied in the Covenant by removing the uncertainty as to the definition of an aggressor State. For Crowe this very uncertainty was one of the advantages of the Covenant as it provided a means whereby Britain could avoid taking any action which conflicted with its national interest.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

Crowe's view was obviously consistent with his criticisms of previous attempts to create through the League a different context for the conduct of international relations. He had no doubt that the provisions for compulsory arbitration and the rules for the application of sanctions against an aggressor laid down in the Protocol were merely paper guarantees which would not prevent a Power from using force if it considered that matters of the very highest national interest were at stake. The process element of disarmament remained for Crowe, therefore, incompatible with the maintenance of Britain's position as a world Power. What is striking about his criticisms of the Protocol is that they focus upon the means by which the international situation was to be altered so that arms limitation, the product element of disarmament, could be achieved: about arms limitation itself and the Conference which the framers of the Protocol intended should take place in June 1925, Crowe had nothing to say.

In another Foreign Office contribution to the debate on the Protocol, Ronald Hugh Campbell pointed out that its supporters claimed that one of its benefits was that it provided 'the only basis for a further reduction of armaments'.<sup>49</sup> Although less strident in his criticisms of the Protocol than Crowe, Campbell's conclusions were essentially the same. He did, however, attach considerable importance to satisfying French security concerns because this was a problem which had been a major source of trouble for successive post-war British Governments. Campbell expected, though, that there would be considerable opposition from the Dominions to the Protocol and he did not think that satisfying French security concerns justified dividing the Empire. The pressing problem for the Government, therefore, was to decide how best to respond to French disappointment at what Campbell described as British

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<sup>49</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 540-B, 20 November 1924

'defection' from the Anglo-French understanding established by Herriot and MacDonald. Campbell believed that Britain would have to enter into a defensive alliance with France as nothing else would compensate it for the loss of the guarantees which it would have gained through the Protocol.<sup>50</sup> It was, of course, just such policy thinking which led to the Locarno Treaties of 1925.

Critics of the Protocol within the Foreign Office had certainly moved rapidly to place their views before the new Foreign Secretary. By the time the first meeting of the CID took place under the new Government on 4 December, however, memoranda attacking the Protocol had been written by the Army, Navy and Air Force, the President of the Board of Trade, the Treasury and Hankey.<sup>51</sup> Baldwin was present at this meeting and took the chair, although Curzon had been appointed President of the CID and it was he who led the discussion on the Protocol. Curzon initially provided a summary of the criticisms which had been made of the Protocol and which were essentially the same as those which had been made of the TMA. The principal concerns were that the Protocol made the Covenant of the League more rigid whereas previous British Governments had sought to render it more flexible and less precise, that its acceptance would make it impossible for the USA to join the League, that it would involve an increase in Britain's commitments and thereby result in an increase in armaments rather than arms reduction and that it would undermine British sovereignty by turning the League into a super-State. It was clear from Curzon's summary that he was opposed to acceptance of the Protocol in its original form and he asserted that detailed amendment would be an extremely

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Cab4/11: CID memoranda 517-B, 30 September 1924, 526-B, 7 November 1924, and 527-B, 29 October 1924; Cab4/12: CID memoranda 536-B, 24 November 1924, 537-B, 26 November 1924, 538-B, 17 November 1924, 539-B, 21 November 1924, 540-B, 20 November 1924, 541-B, 29 November 1924, and 542-B, 1 December 1924

difficult task. Even if the British Government produced an amended draft of the Protocol, Curzon stated that it could not be sure of this winning acceptance from the other Powers and it would, in any case, cause considerable controversy. Despite these doubts, however, Curzon did not believe that the Government could simply reject the Protocol: some alternative would have to be put forward.<sup>52</sup>

Amongst the other members who expressed their thoughts at this CID meeting, only Cecil sought to focus attention on the issue of disarmament. While he was not prepared to express a final view on the Protocol, he held strongly to the idea that disarmament should be the first consideration of the CID simply because the existence of the Protocol depended on agreement first being reached on this issue. Balfour's provisional position was that Britain should confine itself to stating that it could not take part in such a plan until the USA joined the League and Churchill stated that he had never considered that the League was in a position to preserve peace. He argued in favour of regional agreements under the League to establish demilitarized zones in areas held to be of special danger: in this respect he referred to the territory between France and Germany and to the Polish border. There was some agreement about the way forward in that Cecil, Amery and Curzon favoured the establishment of a special committee to examine the issues associated with the Protocol in more detail. Amery wanted this special committee to examine the fundamental principles on which the Protocol and the League were based. Curzon thought it should consider both the Protocol and Britain's attitude to the Covenant and the League, and Cecil, inevitably, wanted it to examine whether disarmament by international agreement could be achieved. He also urged again the involvement of political

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<sup>52</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 4 December 1924.



figures who were not members of the Government, referring specifically to MacDonald, Grey, Asquith and Lloyd George.<sup>53</sup>

As the new Conservative Government began its consideration of the Protocol, the matter of the preparatory work for the Conference on the Reduction of Armaments was considered by the Council of the League at a meeting in Rome on 9 December. At this meeting Chamberlain reported that the Government had not yet had time to consider the Protocol and it was agreed that the Conference on the Reduction of Armaments would be put on the agenda for the next Council meeting which would take place in March 1925.<sup>54</sup> The effect of this was to bring the issue of disarmament to the fore within the CID, albeit temporarily. Just two days later Amery told his colleagues on the CID that he did not believe the Government would have taken a decision on the Protocol by that date. Curzon's worry was that, if this were the case, Britain would be accused of delaying a decision on the Protocol. He argued, therefore, in favour of an early statement to the effect that Britain would not be in a position to discuss the Protocol at the next Council meeting. Crowe clearly thought that it was likely that there would be an Arms Reduction Conference and he suggested that, before any British representatives attended such a Conference, the Chiefs of Staff should agree a disarmament plan which would serve as the basis of the policy to be adopted by Britain. Crowe did not, of course, believe that any such plan was likely to be workable but he argued that the Washington Conference had been successful because the USA had produced a definite plan in advance and this had served as the basis for discussion. In response to this suggestion Balfour asserted that any disarmament plan produced by Britain would be a plan

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>FO371/10572: minutes of the Council of the League of Nations, 9 December 1924

for the disarmament of other nations because Britain had already disarmed to the lowest level consistent with national safety. Amery argued that the Washington Conference had been a success not so much because the USA had prepared a disarmament plan in advance but because only three major naval Powers were involved and they were a long way away from each other and none of them was threatened by naval aggression from a neighbouring Power. By contrast, an Arms Reduction Conference affecting all the European States would involve much greater difficulties. In this Amery was surely correct but his comment did diminish the difficulties at Washington created by the policies of France and Italy.<sup>55</sup>

When Chamberlain returned from the Rome meeting of the League Council he reported to his colleagues on the CID that, as had been anticipated, Belgium and France would still seek a tripartite security pact with Britain, even if the Protocol were signed. Chamberlain had no faith in the Protocol, referring to its rejection as 'quite the easiest of the decisions that we have to take', but he was convinced that it would be 'an absolute disaster' if it were turned down but nothing else was put in its place.<sup>56</sup> Although he had formed as yet no clear idea as to the alternative to the Protocol, it was clear that he was moving towards support for some kind of guarantee treaty with France:

If France and England were united by a Treaty of Guarantee,  
Germany would not go to war and there would be no war in the East  
of Europe. So that there again you come back to this idea that the  
Protocol by itself is insufficient and that a Franco-British Pact really

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<sup>55</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 11 December 1924

<sup>56</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 16 December 1924

gives to Europe, and gives more effectively to Europe, the security which the Protocol affects to provide.<sup>57</sup>

By early January 1925 Chamberlain was convinced both that the Government would have to reject the Protocol and that the key issue was how to ensure European security, which he thought was different from security in the Far East or the Pacific. While Chamberlain thought that he had understood the problem, he was quite open in stating that he did not have a solution. It was for this reason that he summoned a Foreign Office conference for 22 January.<sup>58</sup>

Chamberlain's decision to consult with the Foreign Office heads of department on the situation in Europe followed on from a number of decisions taken by the CID concerning the Protocol. At its meeting of 16 December 1924 the CID decided that Amery should send to the Dominion Prime Ministers and to the Government of India the minutes of that meeting and the previous meeting, held on 4 December, and ask for their initial observations before the end of January. He should also propose to the Dominion Prime Ministers that there be a conference on the Protocol at the beginning of March so that the Government could give a reply to the League at the Council meeting later in that month. As Chamberlain had received contradictory views concerning the opinions of Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes towards the Protocol, it was also agreed that he should find out what Hughes really thought. Most importantly, however, the CID decided to appoint a sub-committee which was to report by 10 January, if possible. The task of this sub-committee was to consider how far the Protocol could be amended so as to meet the criticisms which had been directed against it or to identify the principles which should be

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>FO371/11064: minute by Austen Chamberlain, 4 January 1925

adopted if it were decided that the Protocol should be rejected and other proposals put forward. The fact that Hankey was to chair the four-man sub-committee and that Crowe was to represent the Foreign Office ensured that it would be hostile to the Protocol for both of these men were instinctively opposed to disarmament through the League.<sup>59</sup> There was to be no political sub-committee of the kind which Cecil and Chamberlain had suggested.

When the CID next met, Hankey reported that the sub-committee would be unlikely to have completed its work by 10 January, as had been intended originally, but that it hoped its report would be ready shortly after that date.<sup>60</sup> On the same day Chamberlain explained this situation to the Cabinet and pointed out that until the Government had been able to decide its attitude to the Protocol, it would be necessary to pursue 'a hand to mouth policy' as far as foreign affairs were concerned.<sup>61</sup> It has already been shown, however, that Chamberlain believed that the Protocol would have to be rejected and in a minute of 7 January, Villiers described it as 'practically dead'.<sup>62</sup> The opposition of the US Government to the Protocol confirmed this view. On 5 January the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Esmé Howard, discussed the Protocol with Secretary of State Hughes. Hughes feared that the policy of a Central or South American State might result in the League taking action which would bring it into conflict with the Monroe Doctrine and he also foresaw problems if an armed blockade by the League of an aggressor country interfered with the USA's neutral rights of trade and commerce. Hughes' opposition to the Protocol was very clearly stated to Howard:

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<sup>59</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 16 December 1924

<sup>60</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 5 January 1925

<sup>61</sup>Cab23/49: Cabinet conclusions, 5 January 1925

<sup>62</sup>FO371/11064: minute by Villiers, 7 January 1925

He had hoped that the Protocol would die a natural death, because he saw in it numerous sources of trouble. In fact, if it went through as it was, America could hardly help regarding the League as a "potential enemy".<sup>63</sup>

In order to avoid these problems Howard suggested to Hughes on 5 January that Britain and the Dominion Governments might ratify the Protocol but with the reservation that the Empire would enforce none of the sanctions embodied in it until after consultation and, crucially, agreement with the US Government. In a subsequent conversation with Hughes on 8 January, Howard was told that President Coolidge was prepared to support this proposal as long as it was presented as an entirely British initiative.<sup>64</sup> Despite Howard's enthusiastic support for his own suggestion, this was a path which Chamberlain had no intention of following. In his reply to Howard at the end of January he told him confidentially that there was no likelihood of the British Government ratifying the Protocol unless it was amended in such a way as to make it a very different convention and he was not prepared to support Howard's proposed reservation. In his opinion this would 'turn the United States into a super-state with a vengeance, making them a court of appeal from all proceedings of the League and giving them a right of veto over its decisions'.<sup>65</sup>

Just five days before Chamberlain's letter rejecting Howard's proposed reservation, the sub-committee under Hankey's chairmanship submitted its report regarding possible amendment of the Protocol. As was to be expected, given the

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<sup>63</sup>FO800/257: Howard to Austen Chamberlain, 9 January 1925

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>FO800/257: Austen Chamberlain to Howard, 28 January 1925

influence of Hankey and Crowe, the report came out strongly against the assumptions underpinning the Protocol and did so quite explicitly:

We are at a parting of the ways. Is the League to develop gradually on the lines of the Covenant with a view to achieve pacification by forming the habit among nations of bringing their differences and apprehensions to the Council for settlement with moral force as the principal weapon and with material force in the background as a last resort, or is it to be given a new orientation by superimposing on the Covenant a system of compulsory arbitration closely supported by coercion? We have proceeded on the assumption that the former system is preferred by His Majesty's Government as the basis of the League's activities.<sup>66</sup>

It did not, however, recommend rejection of the Protocol but instead proposed the rejection of nine of its sixteen articles and the significant amendment of the other seven. Particular importance was attached to amendment of Article 16 of the Covenant of the League so that if economic sanctions were applied against an aggressor, these would only affect trade and financial relations between the aggressor state and members of the League. Under Article 16 League members were required to take action to prevent trade and financial relations between the aggressor State and all other States, whether members of the League or not. The sub-committee held that their amendment would be more likely to result in the US Government's accession to the League.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Cab4/12: Report of the Sub-Committee of the Geneva Protocol, 23 January 1925

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

This desire to make the League more acceptable to the USA was, of course, entirely consistent with the frequently expressed concerns of British decision-makers on this point. In other respects, however, the sub-committee was clearly motivated by more cynical political considerations. It did not believe that an amended form of the Protocol could be of benefit to Britain but it decided to avoid recommending its outright rejection because, 'for those Powers who have signed the Protocol, and more particularly France, it will be easier to meet us if we preserve at least the semblance of keeping the Protocol in being than if we oppose to their scheme a simple negation.' A further political reason for not rejecting the Protocol outright was that Britain would avoid being held to blame for frustrating the proposed Arms Reduction Conference which depended on acceptance of the Protocol.<sup>68</sup>

The report of the sub-committee must be regarded as a thoroughly disingenuous document. Neither Hankey nor Crowe had any faith in the League of Nations or disarmament and the report was a highly complex and sophisticated way of burying the Protocol and the proposed Arms Reduction Conference without Britain having to carry the responsibility. It was for this reason that Cecil was so critical of the report when it was first discussed by the CID on 13 February. Although he had been in Geneva until the previous morning and claimed that he had had little chance to examine the report, he had certainly formed a view on it. He asserted that what was proposed in Hankey's report was 'a really fatal policy' because it would have a negative effect on the efforts being made at Geneva to achieve international co-operation:

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

Broadly, I am very firmly opposed to the way this would appear to the Assembly of the League of Nations, or, indeed, to any other body. What they would say is: "We ask you for three things - disarmament, security, arbitration and prohibition of war. You give us no disarmament" - because practically that is the effect of this Report.<sup>69</sup>

Cecil was determined that he should not be pushed into a position where he was defending the Protocol in all its details but, in an argument reminiscent of his defence of the TMA, he asserted that it did not have to be accepted by all the major Powers but could operate within Europe as a kind of regional security pact, as long as most of the European Powers were prepared to accept it. He also thought that the disarmament-Protocol linkage was a good test of how far those who wanted security were being genuine. If such countries were not prepared to go into the Arms Reduction Conference without something more than the Protocol, their insincerity would be clearly exposed. If, however, they went ahead with the Conference but were not prepared to agree to a disarmament scheme, Britain would then be perfectly entitled to say that it could not agree to the Protocol.<sup>70</sup>

Within the CID only Cecil argued in favour of disarmament as it is understood in this study, that is, in terms of both process and product. Hoare, Secretary of State for Air, expressed support for arms reduction but he did not share Cecil's conviction that this could only be achieved through a process of international co-operation based on the League. He was convinced that economic factors were working to draw the European Powers closer together

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<sup>69</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 13 February 1925

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.



regardless of any political action which might be taken. Rather than involvement with these Powers, Hoare urged detachment from them and this, of course, meant rejection of the Protocol.<sup>71</sup> Hoare's colleagues in the CID supported the policy of rejecting the Protocol but there was a strong sense that something would have to be put in its place. Austen Chamberlain was convinced that the issue of security had to be addressed and he favoured doing this by means of an agreement between Britain, France, Belgium and Germany guaranteeing the western frontiers of France.<sup>72</sup> This was a proposal which Gustav Stresemann, Germany's Foreign Secretary, had already made and was, of course, the basis for the Locarno Treaties. Such an agreement, however, would be restricted to the matter of security and would not involve any necessary move to establish a disarmament convention.

It was this strong tendency to de-couple security and disarmament, together with his own sensitivity to criticism from his colleagues in the CID for not offering any constructive proposals in response to the report of Hankey's sub-committee, which prompted Cecil to put forward another attempt to focus his colleagues' attention on disarmament. Richardson has described this as 'an innocuous Protocol together with a mutual assistance arrangement between Britain, France and Germany'.<sup>73</sup> This does not, however, do justice to what was a realistic attempt to deal with European security problems without throwing overboard the principles of the League and a commitment to disarmament defined in terms of aims, process and product. His scheme indicated that he accepted that both the TMA and the Protocol were too complex and required too great a commitment by Britain.

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<sup>71</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 19 February 1925

<sup>72</sup>Cab2/4: CID minutes, 13 February 1925

<sup>73</sup>Richardson, British Disarmament Policy, p.39

Cecil held that French security was not simply an issue of insuring that country against an attack on its territory: threats by Germany and Russia to Poland and Austria would also be perceived by the French as endangering their security. He recognized, however, that considerations of limited power, together with the nature of domestic and Dominion opinion meant that Britain could do little to provide security in central and eastern Europe. It could, though, do something to ensure the security of Western Europe and Cecil envisaged specific obligations being made by Britain to France, Belgium and Germany. To ensure that such a development did not result in the emergence of competing alliance systems he wanted these agreements to be placed under the supervision of the League and for the *casus foederis* to be approved by the Council. He also wanted such agreements to be supplementary to 'some more general obligation to preserve peace, even if that obligation is of a very slight or shadowy description' and to involve some measure of disarmament.<sup>74</sup>

Cecil believed that these objectives could be achieved by means of a five point Convention. Under this the signatory Powers agreed to refrain from aggressive war against each other. In the event of one or more of the signatory Powers resorting to such a war, the others would break off diplomatic relations and consult together as to how to end the aggression. In this case any of them could ask the Council of the League to act as a mediator. Any two or more of the signatory Powers could enter into special defensive agreements but these were subject to the approval and sanction of the League and had to be of such a nature that any of the signatory Powers could join them. Once the Convention was ratified, the Council of the League was to ask the Co-ordination Committee - the successor to the TMC - to draw up a scheme providing the principles on

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<sup>74</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 591-B, 23 February 1925

which arms limitation and reduction might be achieved. Once such a scheme were drawn up, the Council would then summon a Conference to consider it and how it might be applied to the existing international situation. The Convention would remain in force for five years but if, in that time, an arms limitation and reduction scheme were agreed, it was to continue for a further ten years. In the first instance the Convention was to apply only to Europe and would come into force when it was ratified by the European Powers holding permanent seats on the Council and not less than three other Powers holding non-permanent seats.<sup>75</sup>

In his determination to achieve a multi-lateral arms limitation and reduction agreement Cecil had retreated from the principle, enshrined in the TMA and Geneva Protocol, that disarmament had to precede security guarantees. His efforts to ensure that disarmament had a place in the Government's emerging security policy for Western Europe were, however, in vain. When the Cabinet met on 2 March it decided to accept the CID view that the Geneva Protocol was unacceptable. The Imperial Conference on the Protocol, which had been suggested by the CID for early in March, had proved impossible to organize but the Dominion Governments had communicated to the Foreign Office their hostility to the Protocol.<sup>76</sup> At the same time it agreed that it was not sufficient simply to reject the Protocol: some alternative plan would have to be put forward which addressed the issue of national security by easing the state of tension and insecurity which existed in Europe.<sup>77</sup> By this time the Foreign Office, following its meeting of senior officers on 22 January, had concluded that, as the security of France, Belgium and Holland were crucial to the defence of Britain, the British Government should be prepared to offer a

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>FO371/11065: minute by Campbell, 10 March 1925

<sup>77</sup>Cab23/49: Cabinet conclusions, 2 March 1925

guarantee to France and Belgium. Chamberlain stressed that this was not just his personal opinion but that of the Foreign Office as a whole.<sup>78</sup> This comment masked some very considerable differences of opinion amongst senior Foreign Office officials and it is striking that Nicholson, the author of the memorandum setting out the Department's position following the 22 January conference, expressed doubts about the premises and conclusions of the memorandum. He held that Britain could do very little to influence French feelings of insecurity and that it was, therefore, unwise to provide it with a guarantee. He accepted that 'the alternative is to have no objective Foreign Policy at all' and asserted such a position, 'in present conditions, would not be a wholly bad conclusion'.<sup>79</sup>

Chamberlain, however, had no doubt that he was right. The problem which he faced lay not in the Foreign Office but within the Cabinet where he confronted strong opposition, most notably from Churchill, Balfour, Curzon and Birkenhead. The immediate result was that Chamberlain left for a League Council meeting in Geneva without the Cabinet having determined a clear policy.<sup>80</sup> On 12 March the Foreign Secretary told the Council that the British Government had decided to reject the Protocol. He couched this rejection in placatory terms and stated that as far as arbitration, disarmament and security were concerned, the British Government was 'in the fullest accord with the ideals which have animated the Fifth Assembly of the League'. It wanted, however, to take a path very different from that of the Protocol. Chamberlain claimed that

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<sup>78</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 593-B, 20 February 1925

<sup>79</sup>FO371/11065: minute by Nicholson, 26 January 1925

<sup>80</sup>Ferris, *op.cit.*, pp.147-154; Northedge, *Troubled Giant*, pp.249-50; Richardson, *British Disarmament Policy*, pp.39-41; Dutton, D. *Austen Chamberlain - Gentleman in Politics* (Bolton: Ross Anderson, 1985), p.243; Goldstein, E. 'The evolution of British diplomatic strategy for the Locarno Pact, 1924-1925', *passim*, in Dockrill, M. and McKercher, B. (eds.) *Diplomacy and World Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

the best way in which to deal with European tensions was through defensive agreements between small groups of States, framed in accordance with the League.<sup>81</sup> In the face of Cabinet opposition to an Anglo-French pact Chamberlain had already decided to pursue the proposals which Stresemann had put forward in January for a quadruple pact and he urged Herriot to accept this when he saw him in Paris on 6-7 March.<sup>82</sup>

Chamberlain still had much work to do before this policy was brought to success at Locarno in October 1925.<sup>83</sup> His labours, however, pushed disarmament into a subordinate position. During the period from March to October 1925, only Cecil 'harped on the need for disarmament' but his efforts were to no avail.<sup>84</sup> In the final paragraph of the final protocol of the Locarno Conference the representatives of Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia agreed only 'to give their sincere co-operation to the work relating to disarmament already undertaken by the League of Nations and to seek the realisation thereof in a general agreement'.<sup>85</sup> This commitment to disarmament, if it can be so described, was very different from that contained in the TMA and the Geneva Protocol which made the security elements of the Conventions dependent on a general disarmament agreement.

Following the defeat of the Labour Government only Cecil had tried to prevent the Protocol being rejected. This was not, however, because he considered it to be a well structured Convention. In his own memoirs he

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<sup>81</sup>FO371/11065: Austen Chamberlain's speech at the League Council, 12 March 1925

<sup>82</sup>FO371/11065: Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 March 1925

<sup>83</sup>Dutton, *op.cit.*, pp.244-249; Richardson, *op.cit.*, pp.41-42

<sup>84</sup>Crowe, S.E. *Crowe and the Locarno Pact*, E.H.R. 342, January 1972; Cab24/174: CP329, 6 July 1925; Cecil Papers: ADD51078, Cecil to Austen Chamberlain, 7 September 1925

<sup>85</sup>Final Protocol of the Locarno Conference, 16 October 1925, Cmd 2525 of 1925

compared the disarmament element of the Protocol unfavourably with that of the TMA. In correspondence with Hankey, he was even more forthright and described the Protocol as 'a half baked proposal'. Such criticism was not justified because, as has been seen, the two schemes approached disarmament in essentially the same way. Cecil's regret at the Protocol's failure was based on his conviction that there was an over-riding need for a general scheme of disarmament and the Protocol, for all its weaknesses, did, in his opinion, provide the basis for such a scheme.<sup>86</sup>

Yet, for all his regret over the fate of the Protocol, Cecil had previously recognized, in both the TMG and his proposed Convention of February 1925, that a security and disarmament settlement was required primarily for Europe. Headlam-Morley was right to point out that, while the principal purpose of the Protocol was to deal with the strong feelings of insecurity which existed in Europe, its authors had tried 'to find formulas and phrases which in appearance are to be equally applicable to South America, to the Pacific and to the Far East'.<sup>87</sup> Such an aim was unrealistic and, for this reason, even though the Protocol might have drawn France into serious discussion of a disarmament Convention, Baldwin's Administration was right to reject it. It was mistaken, however, in replacing the Protocol with the Locarno system which was essentially 'a local 'Geneva Protocol' minus disarmament'.<sup>88</sup> In failing to address the disarmament issue, the Locarno Treaties ensured that this would continue to be a significant problem in European diplomacy. The Labour and Conservative Governments of 1924-25 would have made better progress in resolving the inter-connected issues of security and disarmament had they based their policies

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<sup>86</sup>Cecil, *op.cit.*, p.159; Cecil Papers: ADD51088, Cecil to Hankey, 24 August 1925

<sup>87</sup>FO371/11064: memorandum by Headlam-Morley, 12 February 1925

<sup>88</sup>Madariaga, *Morning without Noon*, p.57

on the TMA. This provided the most likely means of attaining a general European agreement which dealt with security and disarmament. Europe needed 'a European protocol' but unfortunately neither the MacDonald nor Baldwin Administrations recognized this.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>FO371/11064: memorandum by Headlam-Morley, 12 February 1925

## Chapter 10 - conclusion

This study shows that, although there were five different Cabinets in the period 1918-25, Government policy regarding issues of disarmament was essentially consistent and broadly in line with the thinking of its permanent officials and Service advisers. Only at the Washington Conference and during the League discussions which resulted in the Geneva Protocol did political leaders choose to impose their will on dissident naval advisers. There are a number of reasons why politicians and permanent officials were not committed to multi-lateral disarmament negotiations through the League. In part this reflected their own modes of thinking. British defence and foreign policy was dominated by conservatives who placed their trust in traditional methods of diplomacy rather than the open diplomacy advocated by League enthusiasts. Curzon, Hankey and Crowe were realists who considered that Britain's interests would be best served through the maintenance of strong armed forces and minimal commitments to other Powers: they had no faith in the search for collective security through the League. Crowe, especially, was deeply hostile to the League and he opposed every disarmament initiative which emerged from its various commissions during the post-war years. He even asserted that Government Departments had not been given an opportunity to consider the draft Covenant and implied that, if they had been allowed to do so, they would not have supported it.<sup>1</sup> The League, he believed, threatened to undermine Britain's freedom of action and draw the country into conflicts which it would otherwise have been able to avoid.

Such ideological objections to the League were strengthened by the international situation which developed following the signing of the Versailles

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<sup>1</sup>Cab4/12: CID memorandum 538-B, 17 November 1924



Treaty. The failure of the US Senate to approve the Treaty seriously weakened the League from the outset. The USA's withdrawal from international co-operation imposed a potentially very heavy burden on Britain as the principal supplier of security around the world. This was at a time when the country's imperial responsibilities had increased and there were significant difficulties in some of its overseas territories. The problems which these developments presented were exacerbated by the critical differences between Britain and France over the treatment of Germany. Ministers and officials, therefore, had to formulate policy in a complex and challenging post-war world. In such circumstances it was not surprising that British thinking on defence and foreign policy issues should have been dominated by an essentially realist philosophy.

It is, however, a key argument of this study that an analysis of British defence and foreign policy in the years after the Great War which draws too a sharp distinction between realist and idealist, or liberal, approaches simplifies what was, in reality, a much more complex and dynamic situation. An essentially realist approach did not necessarily exclude the use of idealist or liberal means and this was evident in a number of developments which have been examined. The Plans Division's proposals for naval disarmament in the years before the Washington Conference, the Admiralty's support for negotiations through the League to extend the principles of the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty to non-signatory Powers and Hankey's initial support for the Esher Plan were instances when realist officials attempted to achieve their objectives through liberal means. Ferris' argument concerning British strategic policy in the 1920s - 'Britain did not systematically favour or reject 'liberal' or 'realist' means. It

adopted whatever ones it thought would best achieve its aims in specific circumstances.<sup>12</sup> - can also be applied to its treatment of disarmament issues.

Over chemical warfare, however, which received more Cabinet attention than any of the other disarmament issues considered in this study, Governments pursued a consistently cynical policy which fell between the realist and idealist stools. They had little faith in the international declarations which had been made against the use of chemical weapons, and to which they were a party, but they were not prepared to state this openly and set about educating public opinion to accept that Britain had to maintain a chemical warfare capacity.

This criticism cannot, though, be applied generally to Governments' treatment of other disarmament issues in the post-war years. They should, rather, be faulted for their failure to appreciate that a commitment to the disarmament process could have served British interests. There were occasions when international relations might have been improved, the League strengthened and Britain's prestige raised if multi-lateral disarmament negotiations had been pursued more energetically. US co-operation in the regulation of the arms trade could possibly have been secured earlier if the Foreign Office had taken up the amendments to the Convention of St. Germain which Seymour suggested in June 1921. The Esher plan and Cecil's proposals for budgetary limitation together offered the prospect of progress regarding the limitation of land and air armaments but the Government was not prepared to give them the support they required in order to overcome the hostility of the General Staff. Cecil's purpose in drawing up the TMG had been to achieve a general scheme of disarmament but the TMA, which emerged from League discussions during 1923, fell some way short of this objective. The provision that the TMA had to be ratified

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<sup>12</sup>Ferris, *op.cit.*, p.46

separately in each continent and that participating States could draw up complementary defensive treaties meant, however, that it could have been most advantageous to Britain. If this Treaty had become a reality in Europe, it might have provided the means by which French security demands could have been addressed, a measure of European disarmament achieved and Germany reconciled to the armaments clauses of the Versailles Treaty. From the outset, however, the scheme was condemned by the Service Departments and it never received support from senior officials or Government Ministers, even after Cecil joined Baldwin's first Administration. Following the Labour Government's rejection of the TMA, MacDonald did make a significant contribution to the drawing up of the Geneva Protocol but this was an unrealistic proposal for which his minority Administration was never likely to win Parliamentary approval.

Kitching was essentially correct, therefore, to state that British disarmament policy in this period was reactive.<sup>3</sup> The success of the Washington Conference and the Arms Traffic Convention of 1925 was the product of initiatives by the Harding and Coolidge administrations. Both Esher and Cecil were acting in a private capacity when they put forward their disarmament schemes in 1922 and neither of them at any stage received support or assistance from Whitehall. Cecil was not an easy colleague but his difficulties within Baldwin's first Administration were largely the result of the Foreign Office's opposition to the search for disarmament through the League. MacDonald's speech at the Fifth League Assembly did initiate negotiations which resulted in the Geneva Protocol but this cannot properly be described as a *Government* proposal. The British delegation, led by Parmoor and Henderson, carried out its

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<sup>3</sup>Kitching, *op.cit.*, p.174

work independently of the Government and it is a moot point whether the Protocol would have been approved by the Cabinet had the Labour Government remained in office longer. Segrave's Convention, by which the principles of the Washington Conference were to be extended to non-signatory Powers, clearly was supported by the Admiralty, even though there are no papers extant which deal with the genesis of the scheme. The proposal, however, was not considered by the Cabinet and it did not receive whole-hearted support from the Foreign Office. It is the case, therefore, that the only disarmament proposal in this period which can properly be described as a Government initiative was the draft Convention for the Control of the Arms Traffic which was drawn up by the Foreign Office in December 1918 and resulted in the signing of the Convention of St. Germain in September 1919. Government support, however, did not survive the failure of the USA to ratify the Convention and thereafter Britain failed to play a positive role in international efforts to regulate the arms trade.

It would, though, be an error to place responsibility for the failure of negotiations to achieve general disarmament through the League entirely upon the shoulders of Britain's conservative decision-making élite. There were also important errors of judgement by the TMC. It spent too much time seeking to deal with the alleged evils which resulted from the private manufacture of armaments and was over-ambitious in deciding that all States possessing capital ships, whether League members or not, should be invited to attend the Conference which would consider the draft Convention for the Extension of the Washington Naval Treaty to Non-Signatory Powers. As regards the Esher plan and Cecil's proposals for budgetary limitation, the TMC acted precipitately in accepting the criticisms of the League's technical experts and shelving these schemes in favour of Cecil's other proposal, that disarmament should be achieved through a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. Such errors need not, however,

have been that significant if the British Government had been prepared to use its authority at Geneva in support of disarmament. Lloyd George's involvement in Esher's appointment to the TMC suggested that Britain intended to build on the success which had already been achieved at the Washington Conference and work towards the achievement of land and air disarmament through the League. This apparent enthusiasm soon waned and the British Government returned to its semi-detached engagement with League disarmament negotiations.

Richardson and, to a lesser extent, Kitching, delivered severe judgements on British Governments' handling of disarmament policy during the period from 1919-34. Richardson, however, dealt only with the Baldwin's second Conservative Administration and Kitching concentrated her attention on the decade following the collapse of the first Labour administration. This present study is the first to provide a detailed examination of disarmament policy in the period between the end of the Great War and the signing of the Locarno Treaties. It indicates that, with the exception of chemical warfare, Governments between 1918 and 1925 were guilty of sins of omission rather than commission. Disarmament, as defined here, was one of the means which might have been used in an effort to resolve international differences, especially in Europe. Such a policy was realistic and, on a number of issues, was perceived as such by some within Whitehall. Amongst those with responsibility for formulating disarmament policy, however, Cecil stands out as the only person who revealed a genuine understanding of the fact that a consistent commitment to international negotiation through the League was essential to its success - and he was a post-war Cabinet member for little more than a year during the period covered by this study. The principal criticism to be levelled against British decision-makers is that they manifested an excess of caution and a paucity of imagination.

## **Appendix 1.**

### **DRAFT CONVENTION**

**for the Extension of the Washington Naval Treaty  
to the Non-Signatory Powers of the League of Nations.**

**Albania, Argentine, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Chile,  
Colombia, Costa Rica. Cuba, Czechoslovakia Denmark, Esthonia, Finland,  
Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the  
Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway Panama, Paraguay, Persia, Peru, Poland,  
Portugal, Roumania, Salvador, the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Siam, Spain,  
Switzerland. Sweden, Uruguay, Venezuela, having taken note of the Naval Agree-  
ment entered into at Washington by certain Powers, and desiring also to contribute  
to the maintenance of the general peace and to prevent competition in armaments;**

**Have resolved, with a view to accomplishing these purposes, to conclude a  
Convention to impose limitations on their respective naval armaments  
corresponding to those agreed to at Washington and to that end having appointed  
as their plenipotentiaries:-**

**Who, having communicated to each other their respective full powers, found to be  
in good and due form, have agreed as follows:**

## CHAPTER I.

*Article 1.* - The High Contracting Parties agree to limit their respective Naval Armaments as provided in the present Convention.

*Article 2.* - The High Contracting Parties may retain respectively all vessels of war built or building on November 12th, 1921, of which those exceeding the limitations prescribed for the future by the present Convention are specified in Chapter II, Part I.

*Article 3.* - No new capital ships shall be constructed or acquired by any of the High Contracting Parties except replacement tonnage for the vessels specified in Chapter II, Part I, which may be constructed or acquired as specified in Chapter II, Part 2.

Ships which are replaced in accordance with Chapter II, Part 2, shall be disposed of as prescribed in Part 3 of that Chapter.

*Article 4.* - The total capital ship replacement tonnage of each of the following High Contracting Parties shall not exceed in standard displacement for Argentine 81,000 tons (82,290 metric tons); for Brazil 45,000 tons (45,714 metric tons); for Chile 35,000 tons (35,560 metric tons); for Denmark 13,000 tons (13,206 metric tons); for Greece 36,000 tons (36,571 metric tons); for Netherlands 26,000 tons (26,412 metric tons); for Norway 16,000 tons (16,254 metric tons); for Spain

81,000 tons (82,290 metric tons); for Sweden 62,000 tons (62,984 metric tons).

*Note.* - Article 4 has been drafted in strict accordance with the principles of the *status quo*. Nevertheless, the majority of the Members of the Naval Sub-Commission, feel bound to call the attention of the Council to the resulting inequality between the respective naval forces of the three South American States: Argentine, Brazil and Chile, whereas, from a technical and general consideration of the circumstances of these States, they consider that they should logically have equivalent naval forces, the total tonnage in capital ships remaining, however, below 80,000.

*Article 5.* - No capital ship exceeding 35,000 tons (35,560 metric tons) standard displacement shall be acquired by, or constructed by, for, or within the jurisdiction of, any of the High Contracting Parties.

*Article 6.* - No capital ship of any of the High Contracting Parties shall carry a gun with a calibre in excess of sixteen inches (406 millimetres).

*Article 7.* - The High Contracting Parties may not construct aircraft carriers except within a total tonnage limit equal to one-third of their total, tonnage in capital ships

*Article 8.* - The replacement of aircraft carriers shall be effected only as prescribed



in Chapter II, Part 2, of the present Convention.

*Article 9.* - No aircraft carrier exceeding 27,000 tons (27432 metric tons) standard displacement shall be acquired by, or constructed by, for, or within the jurisdiction of any of the High Contracting Parties.

*Article 10.* - No aircraft carrier of any of the High Contracting Parties shall carry a gun with a calibre in excess of 8 inches (203 millimetres). If the armament carried includes guns exceeding six inches (152 millimetres) in calibre the total number of guns carried, except anti-aircraft guns and guns not exceeding 5 inches (127 millimetres), shall not exceed ten. If alternatively the armament contains no guns exceeding six inches (152 millimetres) in calibre, the number of guns is not limited.

In either case the number of anti-aircraft guns and of guns not exceeding 5 inches (127 millimetres) in calibre is not limited.

*Article 11.* - No vessel of war exceeding 10,000 tons (10,160 metric ton,) standard displacement, other than a capital ship or aircraft carrier, shall be acquired by, or constructed by, for, or within the jurisdiction of any of the High Contracting Parties.

Vessels not specifically built as fighting ships nor taken in time of peace under Government control for fighting purposes, which are employed on fleet duties or as troop transports or in some other way for the purpose of assisting in the

prosecution of hostilities otherwise than as fighting ships, shall not be within the limitations of this article.

*Article 12.* - No vessel of war of any of the High Contracting Parties hereafter laid down, other than a capital ship, shall carry a gun with a calibre in excess of eight inches (203 millimetres)

*Article 13.* - No ship to be scrapped after replacement in accordance with the present Convention may be reconverted into a vessel of war.

*Article 14.* - No preparations shall be made in merchant ships in time of peace for the installation of warlike armaments for the purpose of converting such ships into vessels of war, other than the necessary stiffening of decks for the mounting of guns not exceeding 6 inches (152 millimetres) in calibre.

*Article 15.* - No vessel of war constructed within the jurisdiction of any of the High Contracting Parties for a non-contracting Party shall exceed the limitations as to displacement and armament prescribed by the present Convention for vessels of a similar type which may be constructed by or for any of the High Contracting Parties.

*Article 16.* - If the construction of any vessel of war for a non-contracting Party is undertaken within the jurisdiction of any of the High Contracting Parties, such Party shall promptly inform the Council of the League of Nations of the date of the signing of the contract and the date on which the keel of the ship is laid; and

shall also communicate to the Council the particulars relating to the ship prescribed in Chapter II, Part 2 (b), 4 and 5, of the present Convention.

*Article 17.* - In the event of a High Contracting Party being engaged in war, such party shall not use as a vessel of war any vessel of war which may be under construction within its jurisdiction for any other Power or which may have been constructed within its jurisdiction for another Power and not delivered.

*Article 18.* - Each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes not to dispose by gift, sale, or any mode of transfer of any vessel of war in such a manner that such vessel may become a vessel of war in the Navy of any foreign Power.

*Article 19.* - The rules for determining tonnage displacement prescribed in Chapter II, Part 4, shall apply to the ships of each of the High Contracting Parties.

## CHAPTER II.

### PART I.

*List of capital ships at present possessed by the High Contracting Parties.*

	<i>Names</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>
<b>ARGENTINE</b>	Moreno	27,940
	Rivadavia	27,940
	Garibaldi	6,840

	General Belgrano	6,840
	Pueyrredon	6,840
	Independencia	2,300
	Libertad	2,300
	Total tonnage	81,000
<b>BRAZIL</b>	Minas Geraes	19,200
	Sao Paulo	19,200
	Deodoro	3,162
	Floriano	3,162
	Total tonnage	44,724
<b>CHILE</b>	Almirante Latorre	28,000
	Capitan Prat	9,902
	Total tonnage	34,902
<b>DENMARK</b>	Peder Skram	3,740
	Olfert Fischer	3,642
	Herluf Trolle	3,592
	Skjold	2,165
	Total tonnage	13,139

<b>GREECE</b>	Kilkis	13,000
	Lemnos	13,000
	Giorgios Averoff	9,960
	Total tonnage	35,960
<b>NETHERLANDS</b>	De Zeven Provinciën	6,416
	Marten Harperts Tromp	5,210
	Hertog Hendrik	5,002
	De Ruyter	5,002
	Jakob van Heemskerck	4,920
	Total tonnage	26,550
<b>NORWAY</b>	Eidzvold	4,166
	Norge	4,166
	Harald Haarfagre	3,858
	Tordenskjold	3,858
	Total tonnage	16,048
<b>SPAIN</b>	Jaime I	15,700
	Alfonso XIII	15,452
	Espana	15,452

	Carlos V	9,903
	Pelayo	9,733
	Princesa de Asturias	7,427
	Cataluna	7,405
	Total tonnage	81,072
<b>SWEDEN</b>		
	Drottning Victoria	7,500
	Gustaf V	7,500
	Sverige	6,990
	Oscar II	4,584
	Manligheten	3,779
	Tapperheten	3,779
	Wasa.	3,686
	Oden	3,656
	Niord	3,642
	Thor	3,632
	Aran	3,592
	Dristigheten	3,563
	Gota	3,340
	Thule	3,253
	Total tonnage	62,496

## **PART 2.**

### ***Replacement***

The replacement of capital ships and aircraft carriers shall take place according to the following rules:

*(a)* Capital ships and aircraft carriers twenty years after the date of their completion may be replaced by new construction, but within the limits prescribed in Article 4 and Article 7.

The keels of such new construction may be laid down not earlier than seventeen years from the date of completion of the tonnage to be replaced, provided, however, that no capital ship tonnage shall be laid down until ten years from November 12th 1921.

*(b)* Each of the High Contracting Parties shall communicate promptly to the Council of the League of Nations the following information:

1. The names of the capital ships and aircraft carriers to be replaced by new construction;
2. The date of governmental authorisation of replacement tonnage;
3. The date of laying the keels of replacement tonnage;
4. The standard displacement in tons and metric tons of each new ship to be laid down, and the principal dimensions namely, length at waterline, extreme beam at

or below waterline, mean draft at standard displacement;

5. The date of completion of each new ship and its standard displacement in tons and metric tons, and the principal dimensions, namely, length at waterline, extreme beam at or below waterline, mean draft at standard displacement, at time of completion.

*(c)* In case of loss or accidental destruction of capital ships or aircraft carriers, they may immediately be replaced by new construction subject to the tonnage limits prescribed in Articles 4 and 7 and in conformity with the other provisions of the present Convention, the regular replacement programme being deemed to be advanced to that extent.

In the event of the replacement of a capital ship or aircraft carrier under this clause, the total tonnage possessed shall be kept within the limits laid down for replacement in Articles 4 and by the scrapping, in accordance with the terms of Chapter II, Part 3, of such old vessels as may be necessary.

*(d)* No capital ship or aircraft carrier shall be reconstructed except for the purpose of providing means of defence against air and submarine attack, and subject to the following rules: The High Contracting Parties may, for that purpose, equip existing tonnage with bulge or blister or anti-air attack deck protection, provided the increase of displacement thus effected does not exceed 15 % of the original displacement for each ship. No alteration in side armour, in calibre, number or general type of mounting of main armament shall be permitted.



## PART 3

### *Rules for the Disposal Ships Replaced*

The following rules shall be observed for the scrapping of capital ships and aircraft carriers which are to be disposed of when replaced by new construction in accordance with Articles 3 and 8.

I. A vessel to be scrapped must be placed in such condition that it cannot be put to combatant use.

II. This result must be finally effected in any one of the following ways:

(a) Permanent sinking of the vessel.

(b) Breaking the vessel up. This shall always involve the destruction or removal of all machinery, boilers and armour, and all deck, side and bottom plating.

(c) Converting the vessel to target use exclusively. In such case all the provisions of paragraph III of this part, except sub-paragraph (6), in so far as may be necessary to enable the ship to be used as a mobile target, and except sub-paragraph (7), must be previously complied with. Not more than one capital ship may be retained for this purpose at one time by any of the High Contracting Parties.

III. (a) When a vessel is due for scrapping, the first stage of scrapping, which consists of rendering a ship incapable of further warlike service, shall be immediately undertaken.

(b) A vessel shall be considered incapable of further warlike service when there

shall have been removed and landed, or else destroyed in the ship:

- (1) All guns and essential portions of guns, fire-control tops and revolving parts of all barbettes and turrets;
- (2) All machinery for working hydraulic or electric mountings;
- (3) All fire-control instruments and range finders;
- (4) All ammunition, explosives and mines;
- (5) All torpedoes, war heads and torpedo tubes;
- (6) All wireless telegraphy installations;
- (7) The conning tower and all side armour, or alternatively all main propelling machinery; and
- (8) All landing and flying-off platforms and all other aviation accessories.

IV. The periods in which scrapping of vessels is to be effected are as follows:-

(a) The work of rendering the vessel incapable of further warlike service in accordance with paragraph III of this part shall be commenced not later than the date of completion of its successor, and shall be finished within six months from the date of such completion.

(b) The vessel shall be finally scrapped, in accordance with paragraph II of this part, within eighteen months from the date of completion of its successors. If, however, the completion of the new vessel shall be delayed, then the work of rendering the old vessel incapable of further warlike service in accordance with paragraph III of this part shall be commenced within four years from the laying of the keel of the new vessel, and shall be finished within six months from the date

on which such work was commenced, and the old vessel shall be finally scrapped in accordance with paragraph II of this part within eighteen months from the date when the work of rendering it incapable of further warlike service was commenced.

#### **PART 4.**

##### ***Definitions.***

For the purpose of the present Convention the following expressions are to be understood in the sense defined in this part.

##### ***Capital Ship.***

A capital ship, in the ships hereafter built, is defined as a vessel of war, not an aircraft carrier, whose displacement exceeds 10,000 tons (10,160 metric tons) standard displacement or which carries a gun with a calibre exceeding 8 inches (203 millimetres).

##### ***Aircraft Carrier.***

An aircraft carrier is defined as a vessel of war with a displacement in excess of 10,000 tons (10,160 metric tons) standard displacement designed for the specific and exclusive purpose of carrying aircraft. It must be so constructed that aircraft can be launched therefrom and landed thereon, and not designed and constructed

for carrying a more powerful armament than that allowed to it under Article 10.

*Standard Displacement.*

The standard displacement of a ship is the displacement of the ship complete, fully manned, engined, and equipped ready for sea, including all armament and ammunition, equipment, outfit, provisions and fresh water for crew, miscellaneous stores and implements of every description that are intended to be carried in war, but without fuel or reserve feed water on board.

The word "ton" in the present Convention, except in the expression "metric tons" shall be understood to mean the ton of 2,240 pounds (1,016 kilog).

Vessels now completed shall retain their present ratings of displacement tonnage in accordance with their national system of measurement. However, a Power expressing displacement in metric tons shall be considered for the application of the present Convention as owning only the equivalent displacement in tons of 2,240 pounds.

A vessel completed hereafter shall be rated at its displacement tonnage when in the standard condition defined herein.

## CHAPTER III.

### MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.

*Article 20.* - If during the term of the present Convention the requirements of the national security of any High Contracting Party in respect of naval defence are, in the opinion of that Party, materially affected by any change of circumstances, this opinion shall be communicated to the Council of the League of Nations, who will call a conference of the High Contracting Parties or take such other action as may be necessary for the reconsideration of the provisions of this Convention and its amendment by mutual agreement.

In view of possible technical and scientific developments and of the wording of Article 8 of the Covenant, which states that plans for reduction of armaments shall be subject to reconsideration and revision at least every ten years, the Council of the League of Nations will arrange for a conference of all the High Contracting Parties which shall meet as soon as possible after the expiration of eight years from the coming into force of the present Convention to consider what changes, if any, in the Convention may be necessary to meet such developments.

*Article 21.* - Whenever any High Contracting Party shall become engaged in a war without having violated in any way its obligations as prescribed in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which in its opinion affects the naval defence of its national security, such Party may, after notice to the Council of the League, suspend for the period of hostilities its obligations under the present Convention,

other than those under Articles 13 and 17 provided that such Party shall notify the Council of the League that the emergency is of such a character as to require such suspension.

The Council of the League will in such a case advise as to what temporary modification, if any, should be made in the Convention as between the remaining High Contracting parties and will if necessary, or if desired by one of the High Contracting Parties, call a conference of these Powers with a view to obtaining agreement. Should such consultation not produce agreement, any one of the High Contracting Parties may, by giving notice to the Council of the League of Nations, suspend for the period of hostilities its obligations under the present Convention, other than those under Articles 13 and 17.

On the cessation of hostilities, the Council of the League of Nations will advise as to what modifications, if any, should be made in the provisions of the present Convention and will, if necessary or if desired by one of the High Contracting Parties, call a conference of the High Contracting Parties to consider these questions.

*Article 22.* - The present Convention shall remain in force until December 31st, 1936, and in case none of the High Contracting Parties shall have given notice two years before that date of its intention to terminate the Convention, it shall continue in force until the expiration of two years from the date on which notice of termination shall be given by one of the High Contracting Parties, whereupon the Convention shall terminate as regards all the High Contracting Parties. Such

notice shall be communicated in writing to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations to be laid before the Council, and shall be deemed to have been given, and shall take effect, from the date on which it is received by the Secretary-General.

After the receipt of a notice of termination from any Power, the Council of the League of Nations will summon a conference of all the High Contracting Parties to take place within one year of the date of receipt of such notice.

*Article 23.* - In all cases in the present Convention where one or more of the High Contracting Parties undertakes to notify or inform the Council of the League of certain facts or of action taken, the Council of the League will communicate in the shortest possible time such facts or action to each of the other High Contracting Parties.

*Article 24.* - The present Convention shall be ratified by the High Contracting Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional methods.

The ratifications shall be deposited with the Secretariat of the League of Nations, and the Convention shall come into force when the ratifications of all the States named in Chapter II, Part I, as now possessing capital ships, have been so deposited.

The Secretary-General of the League of Nations will transmit to each of the High Contracting Parties a certified copy of the procès-verbal of the deposit of ratifications.

In faith whereof, the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present  
Convention.

Done at Geneva.....

FO371/8481: 27 July 1922. *Italics original.*



## **Appendix II.**

### **III. TEXT OF THE TREATY OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE.**

#### **PREAMBLE**

The High Contracting Parties, being desirous of establishing the general lines of a scheme of mutual assistance with a view to facilitate the application of Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and of a reduction or limitation of national armaments in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant "to the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations", agree to the following provisions:

#### **ARTICLE 1.**

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that aggressive war is an international crime and severally undertake that no one of them will be guilty of its commission.

A war shall not be considered as a war of aggression if waged by a State which is party to a dispute and has accepted the unanimous recommendation of the Council, the verdict of the Permanent Court of International Justice, or an arbitral award against a High Contracting Party which has not accepted it, provided, however, that the first State does not intend to violate the political independence or the territorial integrity of the High Contracting Party.

## ARTICLE 2.

The High Contracting Parties, jointly and severally, undertake to furnish assistance, in accordance with the provisions of the present Treaty, to any one of their number should the latter be the object of a war of aggression, provided that it has conformed to the provisions of the present Treaty regarding the reduction or limitation of armaments.

## ARTICLE 3.

In the event of one of the High Contracting Parties being of opinion that the armaments of any other High Contracting Party are in excess of the limits fixed for the latter High Contracting Party under the provisions of the present Treaty, or in the event of it having cause to apprehend an outbreak of hostilities, on account of the aggressive policy or preparations of any State party or not to the present Treaty, it may inform the Secretary-General of the League of Nations that it is threatened with aggression, and the Secretary-General shall forthwith summon the Council.

The Council, if it is of opinion that there is reasonable ground for thinking that a menace of aggression has arisen, may take all necessary measures to remove such menace, and in particular, if the Council thinks right, those indicated in subparagraphs *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)*, *(d)* and *(e)* of the second paragraph of Article 5 of the present Treaty.

The High Contracting Parties which have been denounced and those which have stated themselves to be the object of a threat of aggression shall be considered as especially interested and shall therefore be invited to send representatives to the

Council in conformity with Articles 4, 15 and 17 of the Covenant. The vote of their representatives shall, however, not be reckoned when calculating unanimity.

#### ARTICLE 4.

In the event of one or more of the High Contracting Parties becoming engaged in hostilities, the Council of the League of Nations shall decide, within four days of notification being addressed to the Secretary-General, which of the High Contracting Parties are the objects of aggression and whether they are entitled to claim the assistance provided under the Treaty.

The High Contracting Parties undertake that they will accept such a decision by the Council of the League of Nations.

The High Contracting Parties engaged in hostilities shall be regarded as especially interested, and shall therefore be invited to send representatives to the Council (within the terms of Articles 4, 15 and 17 of the Covenant), the vote of their representatives not being reckoned when calculating unanimity, the same shall apply to States signatory to any partial agreements involved on behalf of either of the two belligerents, unless the remaining Members of the Council shall decide otherwise.

#### ARTICLE 5.

The High Contracting Parties undertake to furnish one another mutually with assistance in the case referred to in Article 2 of the Treaty in the form determined by the Council of the League of Nations as the most effective, and to take all appropriate measures without delay in the order of urgency demanded by the circumstances.

In particular, the Council may:

- (a) decide to apply immediately to the aggressor State the economic sanctions contemplated by Article 16 of the Covenant, the Members of the League not signatory to the present Treaty not being, however, bound by this decision, except in the case where the State attacked is entitled to avail itself of the Articles of the Covenant;
- (b) invoke by name the High Contracting Parties whose assistance it requires. No High Contracting Party situated in a continent other than that in which operations will take place shall, in principle, be required to co-operate in military, naval or air operations;
- (c) determine the forces which each State furnishing assistance shall place at its disposal;
- (d) prescribe all necessary measures for securing priority for the communications and transport connected with the operations;
- (e) prepare a plan for financial co-operation among the High Contracting parties with a view to providing for the State attacked and for the States furnishing assistance the funds which they require for the operations;
- (f) appoint the Higher Command and establish the object and the nature of his duty.

The representatives of States recognised as aggressors under the provisions of Article 4 of the Treaty shall not take part in the deliberations of the Council specified in this Article. The High Contracting Parties who are required by the Council to furnish assistance, in accordance with sub-paragraph (b), shall, on the other hand, be considered as especially interested, and, as such, shall be invited to send representatives, unless they are already represented, to the deliberations specified in sub-paragraphs (c), (d), (e) and (f).

## ARTICLE 6.

For the purpose of rendering the general assistance mentioned in Articles 2, 3 and 5 immediately effective, the High Contracting Parties may conclude, wither as between two of them or as between a larger number, agreements complementary to the present Treaty exclusively for the purpose of their mutual defence and intended solely to facilitate the carrying out of the measures prescribed in this Treaty, determining in advance the assistance which they would give to each other in the event of any act of aggression.

Such agreements may, if the High Contracting Parties interested so desire, be negotiated and concluded under the auspices of the League of Nations.

## ARTICLE 7.

Complementary agreements, as defined in Article 6 shall, before being registered, be examined by the Council with a view to deciding whether they are in accordance with the principles of this Treaty and of the Covenant.

In particular, the Council shall consider if the cases of aggression contemplated in these agreements come within the scope of Article 2 and are of a nature to give rise to an obligation to give assistance on the part of the other High Contracting Parties. The Council may, if necessary, suggest changes in the texts of agreements submitted to it.

When recognised, the agreements shall be registered in conformity with Article 18 of the Covenant. They shall be regarded as complementary to the present Treaty, and shall in no way limit the general obligations of the High Contracting

Parties nor the sanctions contemplated against the aggressor State under the terms of this Treaty.

They will be open to any other High Contracting Party with the consent of the signatory States.

#### ARTICLE 8.

The States party to complementary agreements may undertake in any such agreements to put into immediate execution, in the case of aggression contemplated in them, the plan of assistance agreed upon. In this case they shall inform the Council of the League of Nations, without delay, concerning the measures which they have taken to ensure the execution of such agreements.

Subject to the terms of the previous paragraph, the provisions of Articles 4 and 5 above shall also come into force both in the cases contemplated in the complementary agreements and in such other cases as are provided for in Article 2 but are not covered by the agreements.

#### ARTICLE 9.

In order to facilitate the application of the present Treaty, any High Contracting Party may negotiate, through the agency of the Council, with one or more neighbouring countries for the establishment of demilitarised zones.

The Council, with the co-operation of the representatives of the Parties interested, acting as Members within the terms of Article 4 of the Covenant, shall previously ensure that the establishment of the demilitarised zone asked for does not call for unilateral sacrifices from the military point of view on the part of the High

Contracting Parties interested.

#### ARTICLE 10.

The High Contracting Parties agree that the whole cost of any military, naval or air operations which are undertaken under the terms of the present Treaty and of the supplementary partial agreements, including the reparation of all material damage caused by operations of war, shall be borne by the aggressor State up to the extreme limits of its financial capacity.

The amount payable under this Article by the aggressor shall, to such an extent as may be determined by the Council of the League, be a first charge on the whole of the assets and revenues of the State. Any repayment by that State in respect of the principal money and interest of any loan, internal or external, issued by it directly or indirectly during the war shall be suspended until the amount due for cost and reparations is discharged in full.

#### ARTICLE 11.

The High Contracting Parties, in view of the security furnished them by this Treaty and the limitations to which they have consented in other international treaties, undertake to inform the Council of the League of the reduction or limitation of armaments which they consider proportionate to the security furnished by the general Treaty or by the defensive agreements complementary to the general Treaty.

The High Contracting parties undertake to co-operate in the preparation of any general plan of reduction of armaments which the Council of the League of Nations, taking into account the information provided by the High Contracting Parties, may

propose under the terms of Article 8 of the Covenant.

This plan should be submitted for consideration and approved by the Governments, and, when approved by them, will be the basis of the reduction contemplated in Article 2 of this Treaty.

The High Contracting Parties undertake to carry out this reduction within a period of two years from the date of the adoption of this plan.

The High Contracting Parties undertake, in accordance with the provisions of Article 8, para. 4. of the Covenant, to make no further increase in their armaments, when thus reduced, without the consent of the Council.

#### ARTICLE 12.

The High Contracting Parties undertake to furnish to the military or other delegates of the League such information with regard to their armaments as the Council may request.

#### ARTICLE 13.

The High Contracting Parties agree that the armaments determined for each of them, in accordance with the present Treaty, shall be subject to revision every five years, beginning from the date of the entry into force of this Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 14.

Nothing in the present Treaty shall affect the rights and obligations resulting from the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations or of the Treaties of



Peace signed in 1919 and 1920 at Versailles, Neuilly, St. Germain and Trianon, or from the provisions of treaties or agreements registered with the League of Nations and published by it at the date of the first coming into force of the present Treaty as regards the signatory or beneficiary Powers of the said Treaties or agreements.

#### ARTICLE 15.

The High Contracting Parties recognise from to-day as *ipso facto* obligatory, the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice with regard to the interpretation of the present Treaty.

#### ARTICLE 16.

The present Treaty shall remain open for the signature of all States Members of the League of Nations or mentioned in the Annex to the Covenant.

States not Members shall be entitled to adhere with the consent of two-thirds of the High Contracting Parties with regard to whom the Treaty has come into force.

#### ARTICLE 17.

Any State may, with the consent of the Council of the League, notify its conditional or partial adherence to the provisions of this Treaty, provided always that such State has reduced or is prepared to reduce its armaments in conformity with the provisions of this Treaty.

## ARTICLE 18.

The present Treaty shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible at the Secretariat of the League of Nations.

It shall come into force:

In Europe when it shall have been ratified by five States, of which three shall be permanently represented on the Council;

In Asia when it shall have been ratified by two States, one of which shall be permanently represented on the Council;

In North America when ratified by the United States of America;

In Central America and the West Indies when ratified by one State in the West Indies and two in Central America;

In South America when ratified by four States;

In Africa and Oceania when ratified by two States.

With regard to the High Contracting Parties which may subsequently ratify the Treaty, it will come into force at the date of the deposit of the instrument.

The Secretariat will immediately communicate a certified copy of the instruments of ratification received to all the signatory Powers.

It remains understood that the rights stipulated under Articles 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 of this Treaty will not come into force for each High Contracting Party until the Council has certified that the said High Contracting Party has reduced its armaments in conformity with the present Treaty or has adopted the necessary measures to ensure the execution of this reduction, within two years of the acceptance by the said High Contracting Party of the plan of reduction or limitation of armaments.

## ARTICLE 19.

The present Treaty shall remain in force for a period of fifteen years from the date of its first entry into force.

After this period, it will be prolonged automatically for the States which have not denounced it.

If, however, one of the States referred to in Article 18 denounces the present Treaty, the Treaty shall cease to exist as from the date on which the denunciation takes effect.

This denunciation shall be made to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, which shall, without delay, notify all the Powers bound by the present Treaty.

The denunciation shall take effect twelve months after the date on which notification has been communicated to the Secretariat of the League of Nations.

When the period of fifteen years, referred to in the first paragraph of the present Article has elapsed, or when one of the denunciations made in the conditions determined above takes place, if operations undertaken in application of Article 5 of the present Treaty are in progress, the Treaty shall remain in force until peace has been completely re-established.

FO371/9421: 13 October 1923.

## **Appendix III.**

### **V. DRAFT TREATY OF MUTUAL GUARANTEE**

**PREPARED BY LORD ROBERT CECIL.**

#### **(A) TEXT SUBMITTED TO THE PERMANENT ADVISORY COMMISSION**

##### *I. General*

(1) The High Contracting Parties hereby agree that if any one of them is attacked, all the others will forthwith take such action as they may respectively have agreed to take in accordance with this Treaty and any treaty supplementary hereto, provided that this obligation shall be conditional upon the reduction of the military forces of the party attacked as provided (in article ...) [sic.] hereafter.

(2) In consideration of the undertaking contained in the immediately preceding article, each of the High Contracting Parties shall forthwith reduce its military forces maintained in time of peace in the manner and to the extent set out for each of them in the Annex hereto, and shall not thereafter increase them in time of peace without the consent of the Council of the League of Nations.

(3) Each of the High Contracting Parties agrees to receive such military representatives of the League of Nations as the Council may desire to appoint, and undertakes to furnish these representatives with such information regarding its armaments as the Council may from time to time require.

##### *II. Menace in Time of Peace (General).*

(4) In the event of any of the High Contracting Parties regarding itself as

menaced by the preparations or action of whatever kind of any other State, whether a party to this Treaty or not, or as being, on account of its geographical position or for other reasons, in a position of peculiar danger, it may so inform the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, who shall forthwith summon a meeting of the Council of the League.

(5) If the Council, by not less than a three-fourths majority, shall be of opinion that there is reasonable ground for thinking that the said preparations or action constitute a menace as alleged, or that the applying State is in a position of peculiar danger, it shall, at the request of such State, negotiate a special treaty supplementary hereto for affording adequate protection for the menaced State against the danger to which it is exposed. This special treaty shall be in the form of a military convention making detailed provision for military support for the menaced State in case it is attacked.

(6) Any special treaty made in pursuance of Article 5 shall be construed as one with this Treaty, but shall in no way limit the general obligations of the High Contracting Parties.

(7) In the event of any High Contracting Party making the application to the Council referred to in Article 4, all the obligations assumed by such High Contracting Party, including that of Article 2, and all the obligations assumed by the other High Contracting Parties in respect of such High Contracting Party shall be suspended, if it so desires, until the special supplementary treaty which it requests shall have entered into force.

*III. Menace in Time of Peace (due to maintenance of armaments  
in excess of those allowed in the Annex hereto).*

(8) In the event of the High Contracting Parties being of opinion that the military preparations of any State party to this Treaty are in excess of the armaments permitted to the said State in accordance with the Annex hereto, it may so inform the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, who shall forthwith summon a meeting of the Council of the League.

(9) If the Council, by not less than a three-fourths majority, shall be of opinion that there is reasonable ground for thinking that the said preparations are so in excess, it shall make such representations to the Government concerned as it may think right.

(10) If the majority of the Council is not satisfied within six months that the military, naval and air forces of the said Party have been brought into accordance with this Treaty:

(a) It shall suspend the said Party from all its rights under this Treaty under such conditions as it shall think right.

(b) It may take any other measures which it may consider right, including a recommendation to the High Contracting Parties that penalties similar to those provided in Article 16 of the Covenant shall be put into force against the State whose armaments are in excess, that is to say that they will immediately subject it to severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not, and that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this article, in order to minimise the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures.

(11) If the Council, by not less than a three-fourths majority, is of opinion that the excess armaments maintained by any State constitute a danger to the High Contracting Party which has made an application in accordance with Article 8 hereof, the Council shall, at the request of such State, negotiate a supplementary treaty for the defence of the menaced High Contracting Party in accordance with the provisions of Article 5 and 6.

*IV. Provisions for deciding which State is the Aggressor in case of Attack.*

(12) In the event of any of the High Contracting Parties becoming engaged in hostilities with any other State, whether a party to this Treaty or not:

(a) It shall so inform the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, who shall summon a meeting of the Council of the League without delay;

(b) It shall be the duty of the Council of the League, within four days at most from the date on which the Secretary-General receives such information, by not less than a three-fourths majority, to decide which of the States so engaged in hostilities has been the aggressor.

(c) Subject to any other consideration which the Council may think right to take into account, that State shall be considered to be the aggressor which has violated the territory of the other State.

(13) The High Contracting Parties agree to accept the decision of the Council given in accordance with Article 12 and to take the measures necessary to fulfil their obligations under this Treaty immediately this decision has been given.

*V. Provisions for Military Assistance to be given to a State  
which has actually been attacked.*

(14) The High Contracting Parties undertake to co-operate in the manner set out hereafter against any State which the Council has decided, in accordance with Article 12 above, to have committed an act of aggression. The High Contracting Parties undertake to participate, not only in measures undertaken for the defence of the Party attacked, but also in the offensive measures required to reduce the aggressor State to submission.

(15) The High Contracting Parties agree immediately to apply a complete economic and financial blockade, in accordance with Article 16 of the Covenant, against any State which the Council has decided to have committed an act of aggression.

(16) The High Contracting Parties apart from and subject to any supplementary Treaty concluded in accordance with Article 5 or 11 above, agree to bring military assistance to any State which is attacked, in the following manner:

(a) The High Contracting Parties agree to accept the general military command of the General Staff of any State to whom the Council may entrust a mandate to organise the military measures taken by the High Contracting Parties against an aggressor State, subject to any special conditions as regards the employment and safety of its troops which the High Contracting Parties concerned may desire to make.

(b) Each of the High Contracting Parties agrees to maintain at the disposal of such military command an agreed proportion, not being less than one-quarter of its naval and air forces.

(c) The High Contracting Parties agree to utilise those naval and air forces in accordance either: (1) with the instructions given by such military command as is appointed under Article 16 (a), or: (2) pending such



appointment, with plans prepared by the General Staff of the State attacked.

(d) The High Contracting Parties agree to furnish further military help in addition to the naval and air forces referred to in (b) above, if they are requested by the Council to do so. Provided, however, that when any such request is made by the Council, any High Contracting Party which is asked to furnish help shall sit as a Member of the Council.

(17) Nothing in this Treaty shall apply to any of the High Contracting Parties not being a European State to furnish any military forces in Europe, or not being an American State, in America, or not being an Asiatic State, in Asia, or not being an African State, in Africa, provided that this article shall not apply to the naval forces mentioned in Article 16 (b) above.

#### *VI. Reparations and other Provisions.*

(18) The High Contracting Parties agree that the cost of any military operations undertaken in pursuance of this Treaty, including reparation for any material damage committed in the course thereof, shall be borne:

(a) By the aggressor State, and

(b) So far as may be necessary, by the High Contracting Parties, in such proportions and in such manner as may be determined (by an impartial commission appointed for the purpose by the Council of the League of Nations acting by a majority), or by the Permanent Court of International Justice.

(19) Any Member of the League, the United States, Germany or Russia not being one of the signatories to this Treaty may adhere to it by giving notice of adherence to the Secretary-General of the League or to each of the High Contracting

Parties.

Any State may, with the assent of the Council of the League or the High Contracting Parties, adhere conditionally or to part only of the provisions of this Treaty.

Provided always that no such adherence shall be accepted unless the Power so adhering has reduced or is ready to reduce its forces in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty.

(20) Nothing in this Treaty shall be deemed to diminish or affect the provisions in the Covenant for maintaining the peace of the world.

(21) Nothing in this Treaty shall be deemed to alter or affect any provision of the Treaties of Peace signed at Versailles, Saint-Germain, Neuilly and Trianon in 1919 and 1920.

(22) Any question as to the meaning or effect of this Treaty, not being a question whether the naval, military or air forces, or preparations of any of the High Contracting Parties are in excess of those agreed to under the Annex to this Treaty, shall be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice, whose decision shall be final.

(23) In this Treaty the expression "military" shall include naval and air and, except where the context otherwise requires, the singular shall include the plural.

#### *VII. Entry into force of the present Treaty.*

(24) The High Contracting Parties agree that the scales of armaments laid down for each of them in the Annex hereto shall be subject to revision at the expiration of ten years from the date of the entry into force of this Treaty.

(25) This Treaty shall be ratified by the deposit of ratifications with the

Secretary-General of the League of Nations at Geneva. As soon as it is ratified by certain Powers, that is to say:

In Europe, by Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia or such four of them as shall first have ratified it,

In Asia, by Japan and one other Power,

In America, by the United States of America and one other Power,

it shall come into force in respect of that continent, provided always:

(a) That, if any of the ratifying Powers mentioned in this article by name shall not have reduced their armaments in accordance with the Annex hereto within two years of the entry into force of the Treaty, the Treaty shall with regard to such Powers be null and void, and the other High Contracting Parties which have ratified it may at any time denounce it.

(b) That, with respect to the High Contracting Parties, the rights and obligations provided in Articles 1, 11 and 13 to 19 inclusive of this Treaty shall only come into force when the Council shall by a three-fourths majority certify that such High Contracting Party has reduced its armaments in accordance with the Annex hereto, or has taken the necessary steps to secure that such reduction shall have been carried out within two years of the ratification of this Treaty by such High Contracting Parties.

(c) That, in the case of any High Contracting Party which considered itself menaced and so informed the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 4 or 8 of this Treaty, the rights and obligations of the said High Contracting Party be suspended, if it so desires, until the special supplementary treaty for its defence, which it requests, shall have entered into force.

FO371/9421: 13 October 1923. Italics original.

## **Appendix IV.**

### **VI. DRAFT CONVENTION OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE PREPARED BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL REQUIN**

#### **(A) TEXT OF THE DRAFT.**

##### *Note.*

I. The Third Assembly of the League of Nations requested the Temporary Mixed Commission to draw up a Draft Treaty on the basis of the principles contained in No. XIV of its Resolutions.

Under the terms of that resolution, the Treaty in question, which is called a "Treaty of Mutual Guarantee", should constitute the means of achieving the object pursued by the Temporary Mixed Commission, namely, a general reduction of armaments.

Further, a contractual obligation may take the form either of a general treaty or of partial treaties; in the latter case, the reduction of armaments must be proportionate to the guarantees afforded by the Treaty.

This Treaty of Guarantee or defensive agreement must impose upon all the Contracting Parties the obligation to provide immediate and effective assistance in accordance with the pre-arranged plan in the event of one of them being attacked.

II. The Draft of a Treaty of Mutual Guarantee was accordingly submitted by Lord Robert Cecil to the Temporary Commission on Armaments at its meeting on February 4th, 1923. This draft, which is to be examined by that Commission, has

already been submitted to examination from a technical point of view by the Permanent Military, Naval and Air Commission at the request of the Temporary Commission.

The Permanent Commission came to the following conclusion as a result of its technical investigation:

"The Commission is unanimously of opinion that, from a military, naval and air point of view, Lord Robert Cecil's draft does not constitute a solid basis for the scheme for the limitation of armaments."

Further, the Military Sub-Commission explained its position as follows:

According to Lord Robert Cecil's draft,

"No State would have any certainty as to the number and nature of possible conflicts, nor as to the nature and value of the assistance to be provided. No State would know the extent of its possible military commitments, nor even be able adequately to prepare plans for the despatch of its forces and their employment in the numberless operations in which it might be under an obligation to engage.

"If it were itself attacked, it would have no certainty as to the assistance it would receive, nor as to who would furnish this assistance, nor how and when it would be brought into action. It is considered, therefore, that the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee *does not afford definite guarantees for immediate and effective assistance, and consequently does not provide a sound basis for a scheme for the reduction of armaments.*

"The combination of a general treaty with supplementary treaties, in the form advocated by the author of the plan, disregards or gives too little weight to two essential principles laid down by the Assembly:

that which makes reductions in armaments proportionate to the guarantee afforded by a treaty;

and that which requires that mutual assistance, in order to be immediate and effective, should form the subject of pre-arranged plans.

*"Subject to these reservations, the idea of combining partial agreements with general obligations is a happy one. An attempt might be made to discover a practical method of applying it, based on the necessities of modern warfare. Thus, assistance might be organised beforehand with a degree of completeness which would vary, both according to the nature of the assistance and chronologically, according to the degree of urgency, without in any way losing sight of the primary necessity of preventing the development of a conflict."*

III. Bearing in mind these observations of the Military Sub-Commission, Lt.-Colonel Réquin has prepared a "Draft of a General Convention of Mutual Assistance", which he has the honour to submit to the Temporary Mixed Commission for consideration.

The features of this draft are as follows:

(1) The object of the General Convention is to give effect to the obligations of mutual guarantee inserted in Article 10 of the Covenant, in order to enable the reduction of armaments to the lowest point consistent with national safety to be carried out in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant. It is in conformity with the general principles contained in Resolution XIV adopted by the Third Assembly.

(2) The Convention provides for the combination which was regarded by the Military Sub-Commission as a happy idea, of a general agreement and partial agreements, namely, of the two forms suggested in Resolution XIV.

(3) The General Convention does not impose upon the Contracting States any obligations other than those already contained in the Covenant, and, in particular, in

Article 10; it organises general measures of assistance to be rendered by all the signatory States, measures either to supplement the assistance resulting from partial agreements, or to take the place of such assistance in cases in which partial agreements do not exist between certain States.

(4) Partial agreements are the essence of the system of assistance and are intended to establish defensive groups in accordance with one of the essential principles laid down under paragraph 3 of Resolution XIV, and referred to by the Military Sub-Commission, *i.e.*, the necessity for providing immediate and effective assistance in accordance with a pre-arranged plan. Such agreements would, moreover, be subjected to periodical revision by the signatory States, the necessity of which was emphasised in the technical Report of the Permanent Commission on Resolution XIV.

(5) This system of combined measures of assistance, with the guarantees of immediate and effective help which it offers to all States, constitutes a solid basis for a scheme for the reduction of armaments. States which are bound by partial agreements will be under the obligation, if the military conventions supplementary to these agreements allow them to do so, to carry out, in accordance with paragraph 4 of Resolution XIV, the reduction which they consider to be "proportionate to the guarantees afforded by the Treaty". The other States, which consider that the general measures of assistance are sufficient for them, will also proceed to reductions of armaments to the extent to which they are enabled to do so by the confidence which they feel in that assistance. The scheme for the reduction of armaments will therefore be general, in accordance with paragraph 1 of Resolution XIV.

(6) The Draft Convention which is attached does not refer to certain questions dealt with in Lord Robert Cecil's draft, *e.g.*, the supreme command of the forces of assistance, the supervision of armaments and the settlement of expenditure caused by

the operations. Some of these questions may be settled by means of partial agreements; for others, it is difficult to find any general solution applicable in all cases which may arise, and, consequently, capable of being incorporated in a text as general as that of the proposed Draft Convention.

(7) It is to be clearly understood that the Draft Convention does not in any way abrogate the provisions of the Peace Treaties or the obligations resulting from existing treaties which are known to have been concluded between certain States.

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*Preamble.* - The High Contracting Parties, being desirous of establishing the general lines of a scheme of mutual assistance for the purpose of enabling national armaments to be reduced, in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, "to the lowest point compatible with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations", and also for the purpose of giving effect to the obligations set forth in Article 10 of the Covenant "to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League",

Agree to the following provisions:

*Article 1.* - The High Contracting Parties mutually undertake to furnish assistance to any one of their number in case it should be the object of aggression after having reduced its armaments in conformity with Articles 3, 4 and 7 of the present Treaty.

*Article 2.* - In order to enable the High Contracting Parties to render the general assistance provided for in Article 1 above immediately effective, the High Contracting Parties may conclude, either as between two of them or as between a



larger number, agreements establishing groups for purely defensive purposes, and settle in advance the measures of assistance which they would give to each other, in accordance with Article 10 of the Covenant, in the event of any case of aggression which they may consider possible against any of them.

*Article 3.* - Those of the High Contracting Parties which have concluded agreements of the character mentioned in Article 2 undertake, if the military conventions designed to ensure the execution of those agreements enable them to contemplate reductions of armaments, to inform the Council of the League of Nations of the reductions which they consider to be proportionate to the guarantees afforded to them by these agreements, and which they consequently propose to carry out.

The agreements concluded, together with information on the proposed reduction of armaments, shall be communicated to the League of Nations *in order that the possible cases of aggression provided for in the said agreements may be recognised by the Council as being included in the cases of aggression in which they will be bound to make recommendations for the additional assistance referred to in the second paragraph of Article 5.*

They shall be registered in accordance with Article 18 of the Covenant.

*Article 4.* - The High Contracting Parties signatory to the agreements mentioned above undertake to carry out the reductions of armaments which are referred to in the preceding article, and notice of which has been given to the Council, as soon as they are satisfied that the measures adopted by the co-signatory States make it possible, *in case of aggression, and in the circumstances expressly defined in the said agreements*, to carry out the scheme of mutual assistance provided for therein.

*They shall inform the Council in regard to the reductions of armaments effected.*

*Article 5.* - In all cases of aggression, for which provision is made in the agreement constituting a defensive group, the High Contracting parties which are members of this group undertake to put into operation automatically the plan of assistance agreed upon between them; in all other cases of aggression, or menace or danger of aggression, directly aimed at them, they will consult each other before taking action, and will inform the Council of the measures which they have taken or are contemplating, in order that the Council may take the action laid down in Article 10 of the Covenant.

The other High Contracting Parties undertake to render in all circumstances to the members of any defensive group the assistance which the Council of the League may recommend, as in the case mentioned in Article 6 below, and under the conditions laid down in that article.

*Article 6.* - The High Contracting Parties undertake to render to those of their number which are victims of an aggression or are threatened by aggression, and which do not belong to any defensive group, general assistance in such form as the Council of the League of Nations may recommend as being the most effective, after recognising the legitimate character of the defensive action undertaken by the said Powers. Arrangements shall be made for giving this assistance without delay and it shall be supplied progressively according to the order of urgency which the circumstances prescribe, to repel aggression and to punish the aggressor.

*Article 7.* - The High Contracting Parties which are not members of a defensive group, and which consider that the general measures of assistance provided for in the preceding article are sufficient to ensure their national safety, must inform the Council of the League of the reductions of armaments which they propose to carry out, or of the limitations of armaments beyond which they do not intend to go. They shall proceed to carry out such reductions at the same time as the Powers which are

members of neighbouring defensive groups.

*Article 8.* - Each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes to accord to the military or other delegates of the League of Nations, appointed by the Council, the same privileges as are accorded to military, naval and air *attachés* accredited to it, and to furnish them with information in regard to their armaments of the same nature as is at present supplied to such *attachés*.

*Article 9.* - No State shall be under an obligation to co-operate in another continent than the one in which it is situated in military, naval or air operations undertaken in connection with the general or supplementary assistance provided for in Articles 5 (paragraph 2) and 6 respectively of the Treaty.

*Article 10.* - The High Contracting Parties agree that the whole costs of any military, naval or air operations which are undertaken under the terms of the present Treaty and of the supplementary partial agreements, including the reparation of all material damage caused by operations of war, shall be borne by the aggressor State up to the extreme limits of its financial capacity.<sup>1</sup>

*Article 13.* - The present Convention does not in any way abrogate the rights and obligations resulting from the provisions of the Covenant or of the Treaties of Peace signed in 1919 and 1920 at Versailles, Saint-Germain, Neuilly and Trianon, or from the provisions of existing agreements which are known to have been concluded between certain States, in relation to the Powers signatory to, or beneficiary by, the said treaties or agreements.

FO371/9421: 13 October, 1923. Italics original.

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<sup>1</sup>Articles 11, 12, and 14, which were without importance from a *technical* point of view, were not submitted to the Permanent Advisory Commission. They were, however, submitted on July 16th 1923, to the Special Committee which sat in London to examine Lieutenant-Colonel Réquin's proposal.

## **Appendix V.**

### **Brief biographical notes**

**Amery, Leopold Stennett (1873-1955):** Conservative MP for Sparkbrook, 1911-45; Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 1919-21; Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty, 1921-22; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1922-24; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1924-29; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 1925-29; Secretary of State for India and Burma, 1940-45

**Avenol, Joseph Louis Anne (1879-1952):** Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1923-32; Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1933-40

**Baldwin, Stanley, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Bewdley (1867-1947):** Conservative MP for Bewdley, 1908-37; President of the Board of Trade, 1921-22; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1922-23; Prime Minister, 1923-24, 1924-29, and 1935-37; Lord Privy Seal, 1932-34; Lord President of the Council, 1931-35

**Balfour, Arthur James, Earl of Balfour (1848-1930):** Conservative MP for Hertford, 1874-85; Conservative MP for the Eastern Division of Manchester, 1885-1906; Leader of the House of Commons and First Lord of the Treasury, 1891-92; Leader of the Opposition, 1892-95; Leader of the House of Commons and First Lord of the Treasury, 1895-1906; Prime Minister, 1902-05; Conservative MP for the City of London, 1906-22; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1915-16; Foreign Secretary, 1916-19; Lord President of the Council, 1919-22 and 1925-29; leader of the British delegation at the Washington Conference, 1921-22

**Barstow, Sir George Lewis (1874-1966):** joined the Treasury, 1898; Controller of Supply Services, Treasury, 1919-27

**Bartolomé, Admiral Sir Charles Martin de (1871-1941):** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy, 1918-19

**Beatty, David, Earl Beatty (1871-1936):** First Sea Lord, 1919-27

**Bellairs, Commander Carlyon (1871-1955):** Liberal MP for King's Lynn, 1906-09; Conservative MP for King's Lynn, 1909-10, and for Maidstone, 1915-31; declined a baronetcy, 1927

**Benes, Eduard (1884-1948):** Czechoslovak politician; Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1918-35; Prime Minister, 1921-22; President, 1935-38 and 1945-48; member of the Council of the League of Nations, 1923-27 and from 1933; President of the League Assembly, 1935; one of the drafters of the Geneva Protocol, 1924

**Birch, Sir Noel (1865-1939):** Director General of the Territorial Army, 1921-23; Master-General of the Ordnance and fourth military member of the Army Council, 1923-27

**Birkenhead, (1<sup>st</sup> Earl) Frederick Edwin Smith (1872-1930):** Conservative MP for Walton, Liverpool, 1906-19; Lord Chancellor, 1919-22, Secretary of State for India, 1924-28

**Borah, William Edgar (1865-1940):** US Senator, 1907-42

**Borden, Sir Robert Laird (1854-1937):** Prime Minister of Canada, 1911-20; representative of Canada at the Imperial War Cabinet, 1917-18, and the Imperial War Conference, 1917 and 1918; Plenipotentiary Delegate for Canada at the Washington Conference, 1921-22

**Bourgeois, Léon Victor Auguste (1851-1925):** French politician; Minister of Justice, 1892-93; Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, 1895-96; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1896 and 1906; French representative on the Council of the League of Nations, 1920-24

**Briand, Aristide (1862-1932):** French politician; Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, 1909-11 and January-February 1913; Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1915-17 and 1921-22; Minister for Foreign Affairs, April-November 1924; Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1925-26; Prime Minister, 1929

**Cadogan, Sir Alexander George Montagu (1884-1968):** entered the Diplomatic Service in 1909; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1919; promoted to be a Counsellor, 1928; Minister in Peking, 1934-36; Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, 1936-38; Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, 1938-46; Permanent British representative to the United Nations, 1946-50

**Campbell, Ronald Hugh, b.1883:** entered the Foreign Office, 1907; joined the Diplomatic Service, 1910; Private Secretary to Curzon, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1919-20; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1919; served in the Western Department

**Campbell, Ronald Ion, b.18890:** entered the Diplomatic Service, 1914; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1922, transferred to the Foreign Office, 1923; served in the American Department

**Cavan, (10<sup>th</sup> Earl of) Field Marshal Frederic Rudolph Lambart (1865-1946):** Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1922-26; head of the War Office Section of the

British Delegation at the Washington Conference, 1921-22

**Cecil of Chelwood, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Edward Algernon Robert Cecil (1864-1958):**

Conservative MP for East Marylebone, 1906-10, Independent Conservative MP for Hitchin, 1911-23, Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1918; Lord Privy Seal, 1923-24; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1924-27

**Chatfield, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Admiral of the Fleet Alfred Ernle Montacute (1873-1967):**

Fourth Sea Lord, 1919-20; British Naval Representative, Washington Naval Conference, 1921-22; Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, 1920-22; First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, 1933-38; Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, 1938-39

**Chetwode, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Field Marshal Philip Walhouse (1869-1950):** Deputy Chief

of the Imperial General Staff, 1920-22; Adjutant-General to the Forces, 1922-23; Commander-in-Chief, Aldershot Command, 1923-27; ADC General, 1927-31; Chief of General Staff, India, 1928-30; Commander-in-Chief of the Army in India, 1930-35

**Chilton, Henry Getty, b.1877:** joined the Diplomatic Service, 1902; acted as Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Rio de Janeiro, 1920-21; acted as Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy of Washington, 1 April-11 April and 28 June-11 August 1922, and from 27 June 1923 to 9 January 1924 and from 24 January to 28 February and 1-11 July 1924; appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Washington, 10 July 1924

**Churchill, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer (1874-1965):** Conservative MP for Oldham, 1900-04; Liberal MP for Oldham, 1904-06; Liberal MP for NW Manchester, 1906-08; Liberal MP for Dundee, 1908-18; Coalition Liberal MP for Dundee, 1918-22; Constitutional MP for Epping, 1924-31; Conservative MP for Epping, 1931-45;

Conservative MP for Woodford, 1945-64; President of the Board of Trade, 1908-10; Home Secretary, 1910-11, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1911-15; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1915; Minister of Munitions, 1917; Secretary of State for War and Air, 1919-21; Secretary of State for Air and the Colonies, 1921; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1921-22; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1924-29; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1939-40; Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, 1940-45; Leader of the Opposition, 1945-51; Prime Minister, 1951-55

**Clerk, Sir George Russell (1874-1951):** entered the Foreign Office, 1898; private secretary to Lord Curzon, 1919; Minister to Czechoslovakia, 1919-26; British Ambassador to Turkey, 1926-33, to Belgium, 1933-34, to France, 1934-37

**Crewe, (1<sup>st</sup> Marquess) Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes (1858-1945):** Secretary of State for India, 1910-15; Lord President of the Council, 1915-16; Ambassador in Paris, 1922-28

**Cripps, Charles Alfred, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Parmoor (1852-1941):** Lord President of the Council, 1924 and 1929-31; British representative on the Council of the League of Nations and delegate to the League of Nations Assembly, 1929-31

**Crowe, Sir Eyre (1864-1925):** joined the Foreign Office in 1885; Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1912-29; Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1920-25

**Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925):** Conservative MP for Southport 1886-98; Under-Secretary at the India Office, 1891-92, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1895-98, Viceroy of India, 1898-1905; Lord Privy Seal 1915-16; Lord President of the Council, 1916-19;



Foreign Secretary 1919-23; Lord Privy Seal 1924-25

**Derby, (17<sup>th</sup> Earl of) Edward George Villiers Stanley (1865-1948):** Conservative MP for West Houghton, 1892-1906; Secretary of State for War, 1916-18 and 1922-24; Ambassador to France, 1918-20

**Dodd, Charles Edward Shuter (1891-1974):** joined the Diplomatic Service, 1919; transferred to the Foreign Office, 1922; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1924;

**Domville, Admiral Sir Barry Edward (1878-1971):** Assistant Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 1912-14; Director of Plans Division, Admiralty, 1920-22; Chief of Staff, Mediterranean, 1922-25

**Drummond, James Eric, 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Perth (1876-1951):** entered the Foreign Office, 1900; private secretary to the Prime Minister, Asquith, 1912-15; private secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, 1915-16; private secretary to the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, 1916-18; attached to the British delegation to the Peace Conference, 1918-19; first Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1919-33; British Ambassador to Rome, 1933-39

**Esher, (2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount) Reginald William Brett (1852-1930):** Liberal MP for Penryn and Falmouth, 1880-85; Chairman of the Prime Minister's Committee on the War Office, 1903; appointed a permanent member of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1905

**Fisher, Herbert Alfred Laurens (1865-1940):** President of the Board of Education 1916-22; British delegate to the League of Nations Assembly, 1920-22

**Fisher, Sir Warren (1879-1948):** Permanent Secretary of the Treasury and Official Head of the Civil Service, 1919-39

**Fitzmaurice, Vice-Admiral Sir Maurice Swynfen (1870-1927):** Director of Naval Intelligence, 1921-24

**Flint, Alexander (1872-1932):** Principal Assistant Secretary at the Admiralty, 1921-32

**Foulkes, Major-General Charles Howard (1875-1965):** Gas Adviser to the British Armies in France, 1915-17; Director of Gas Services for the British Armies in France, 1917-18; appointed President of the Chemical Warfare Committee, 1918; toured India in order to lecture, investigate and discuss with the Indian Government the possibility of using gas against the tribesmen on the North West Frontier, 1919-20; appointed Director of Irish Propaganda, 1921

**Fuller, Admiral Sir Cyril Thomas (1874-1942):** Director of Plans Division, Naval War Staff, 1917-20; Head of British Naval Section, Paris Peace Conference, 1919; Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, 1922-23; Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy, 1923-25; Second Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Personnel, 1930-32

**Fergusson, Admiral Sir James Andrew (1871-1942):** commanded Devonport Reserve, 1919; Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty, 1919-20; commanded the First Light Cruiser Squadron, 1920-22; Commander-in-Chief North America and West Indies Station, 1924-26

**Geddes, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Auckland Campbell (1879-1954):** President of the Board of Trade, 1919-20; British Ambassador to the USA, 1920-24

**Geddes, Sir Eric Campbell (1875-1937):** Conservative MP for Cambridge, 1917-22; Minister of Transport, 1919-21; Chairman of the Committee, appointed by the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, to advise on all questions of National Expenditure,  
August 1921-March 1922

**Grew, Joseph Clark (1880-1965):** Acting Chief, Division of Western European Affairs, US Department of State, 1917-18; Secretary-General, American Commission to negotiate peace, 1919; Minister to Denmark, 1920; Minister to Switzerland, 1921; US representative at Lausanne Conference, 1922-23; unofficial US representative with Temporary Mixed Commission of the League of Nations for the Control of Traffic in Arms, Geneva and Paris, 1924; Under-Secretary of State, 1924-27; Ambassador to Turkey, 1927-32; Ambassador to Japan, 1932-41; Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, 1942-44; Director, Office of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State, 1944; Under-Secretary of State, 1944-45

**Grey, Edward, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount of Fallodon (1862-1933):** Liberal MP for Berwick on Tweed, 1885-1916; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1905-16

**Guest, Captain Frederick Edward (1875-1937):** Liberal MP for E.Dorset, 1911-22; Liberal MP for Stroud, 1923-24, and for Bristol N., 1924-29; joined the Conservative Party in 1930; Secretary of State for Air, 1921-22

**Haldane, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Richard Burdon (1856-1928):** Liberal MP for Haddingtonshire, 1885-1911; Secretary of State for War, 1905-12; Lord Chancellor, 1912-15 and 1924

**Halifax, (1<sup>st</sup> Earl of) Edward Frederick Lindley Wood (1881-1959):** Conservative MP for Ripon, 1910-25; President of the Board of Education, 1922-24, Minister of Agriculture, 1924-25; Viceroy of India, 1926-31; President of the Board of Education, 1932-35; Secretary of State for War, 1935; Lord Privy Seal, 1935-37;

Leader of the House of Lords, 1935-38 and 1940; Lord President of the Council, 1937-38; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1938-40; British Ambassador at Washington, 1941-46

**Hall, Admiral Sydney Stewart (1872-1955):** commanded the Submarine Service, 1906-10

**Hankey, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Sir Maurice Pascal Alers (1877-1963):** Naval Assistant Secretary, Committee of Imperial Defence, 1908-12; Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1912-38; Secretary of the War Cabinet, 1916-19; Secretary of the Cabinet, 1919-38; Clerk to the Privy Council, 1923-38; Minister without Portfolio and member of the War Cabinet, 1939-40; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1940-41; Paymaster-General, 1941-42

**Harding, Warren Gamaliel (1865-1923):** member of the US Senate from Ohio, 1915-21; President of the USA, 1920-23

**Headlam-Morley, James Wycliffe b.1863:** Assistant Director of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, 1918-20; attached to the British Delegation to the Peace Conference at Paris, 1919; appointed Historical Adviser to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1920

**Horne, Robert Stevenson, Viscount Horne of Slamannan (1871-1940):** Conservative MP for Hillhead, Glasgow, 1918-37; President of the Board of Trade, 1920-21; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1921-22

**House, Edward Mandell (1858-1938):** Personal Representative of President Wilson to the European Governments 1914-16; represented the USA at the making of the Armistice, November 1918; US Peace Commissioner, Versailles, 1918-19; member

of the Commission charged by the Peace Conference to make the Covenant for the League of Nations

**Howard of Penrith, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Esmé William Howard (1863-1939):** entered the Diplomatic Service, 1885; Minister to Sweden, 1913-1919; Ambassador to Spain, 1919-24; Ambassador to the USA, 1924-30; member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919

**Hughes, Charles Evans (1862-1948):** lawyer; Governor of New York, 1907-10; nominated for US President in the Republican National Convention, Chicago, June 1916; US Secretary of State, 1921-25; Judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice, the Hague, 1928-30; Chief Justice of the USA, 1930-41

**Hughes, William Morris (1864-1952):** Prime Minister of Australia, 1915-23; member of the Imperial War Cabinet and delegate to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919; Minister for External Affairs, 1937-39; Minister for Industry, 1939-40; Minister for the Navy, 1940-41

**Jones, Thomas (1870-1955):** Assistant Secretary and, subsequently, Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, 1916-30

**Imperiali, Marquis Guglielmo (1858-1944):** Italian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, 1910-20; Italian representative to the Council of the League of Nations, 1921-23

**Baron Islington, Sir John Poynder Dickson (1866-1936):** MP for Chippenham, 1892-1910, first as a Conservative and then, from 1905, as a Liberal, Governor of New Zealand, 1910-12; Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Public Services in India, 1912-14; Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1914-15; Under-Secretary

of State for India, 1915-18

**Kato, Admiral Baron Tomosaburo (1859-1923):** entered Japanese Navy aged 12; promoted to Admiral, 1915; Minister of Marine, 1918; one of the three chief Japanese delegates at the Washington Conference, 1921-22

**Keyes, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Admiral of the Fleet Roger John Brownlow Keyes (1872-1945):** Director of Plans Division, Admiralty, 1917; Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, 1921-25; National Conservative MP for Portsmouth North, 1934-43; Director of Combined Operations, 1940-41

**Law, Andrew Bonar (1858-1923):** Conservative MP for Blackfriars division of Glasgow, 1900-1906; Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, 1902-06; Unionist MP for Dulwich, 1906-10; Conservative MP for Bootle, 1911-18; Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, 1911-15; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1915-16; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1916-18; Conservative MP for Glasgow, 1918-23; Lord Privy Seal, 1919-21; Prime Minister, 1922-23

**Lee of Fareham, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Arthur Hamilton Lee (1866-1947):** Conservative MP for Fareham, 1900-1918; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1921-22

**Lloyd George, David, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Dwyfor (1863-1945):** Liberal MP for Caernarvon, 1890-1931; Independent Liberal MP for Caernarvon, 1931-44; President of the Board of Trade, 1905-08; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908-15; Minister of Munitions, 1915-16; Secretary of State for War, 1916; Prime Minister, 1916-22

**Lockhart, Lawrence, b.1887:** appointed a temporary Clerk in the Foreign Office, 10 April 1916; resigned 31 July 1919; served as a temporary Clerk from January 1920 until his appointment was terminated on 31 March 1921

**Lodge, Henry Cabot (1850-1924):** member of the US House of Representatives, 1887-1893; member of the US Senate from 1893

**Long, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Walter Hume Long (1854-1924):** Conservative MP for North Wiltshire, 1880-85, for Devizes, 1885-92, for West Derby (Liverpool), 1892-1900, for South Bristol, 1900-1906, for South Dublin, 1906-10, for Strand Division, 1910, and for St. George's, Westminster, 1919-21; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1916-18; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1919-21

**MacDonald, James Ramsay (1866-1937):** Labour MP for Leicester, 1906-18; Leader of the Labour Party, 1911-14; Labour MP for Aberavon, 1922-29; Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1924; Prime Minister, 1929-35; Lord President of the Council, 1935-37

**McNeill, Ronald John, Baron Cushendun (1861-1934):** Conservative MP for St. Augustine Division of Kent, 1911-18, and for Canterbury, 1918-27; Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1922-24 and November 1924-25; Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1925-27; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1927-29; Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, August-December 1928

**Madariaga, Don Salvador de (1886-1978):** member of the Press Section of the League of Nations Secretariat, 1921-22; Director of the Disarmament Section of the League of Nations Secretariat, 1922-27; Secretary of the Temporary Mixed Commission for Disarmament and then of the Preparatory Commission for a Disarmament Conference; Secretary of the Third (Disarmament) Commission of the Assembly of the League of Nations, 1922-27; Secretary-General of the International Conference for the Supervision of the Trade in Arms, Geneva, 1925; Spanish

Ambassador to the USA, 1931, and to France, 1932-34; Permanent Spanish Delegate to the League of Nations, 1931-36

**Massey, William Ferguson (1856-1925):** entered the New Zealand Parliament, 1894; Leader of the Opposition, 1903; Prime Minister, 1912-25

**Maurice, Major-General Sir Frederick (1871-1951):** Director of Military Operations, Imperial General Staff, 1915-18; Principal, Working Men's College, St. Pancras, 1922-23; Principal of Queen Mary College (London University), 1933-44; Professor of Military Studies, London University, 1927

**Meighen, Arthur (1874-1960):** Canadian politician; Prime Minister and Secretary for External Affairs, 1920-21; Prime Minister, July-September 1926; member of the Imperial War Cabinet, 1918

**Milner, Alfred, Viscount Milner (1854-1925):** Minister without portfolio in the War Cabinet, 1916-18; Secretary of State for War, 1918-19; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1919-21

**Montagu, Edwin Samuel (1879-1924):** Liberal MP for Chesterton, 1906-22; Secretary of State for India, 1917-22

**Nicholson, Harold George (1886-1968):** entered the Diplomatic Service, 1909; transferred to the Foreign Office, 1914; promoted to be a Second Secretary, 1919, a First Secretary, 1920, and a Counsellor, 1925; resigned, 1929

**Noel-Baker, Philip John, Baron Noel-Baker (1889-1982):** member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, 1919; served with the Secretariat of the League of Nations, 1919-22; Professor of International Relations, London University,



1924-29; Labour MP for Coventry, 1929-31; Labour MP for Derby, 1936-70; Secretary of State for Air, 1946-47; Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 1947-50; Minister for Fuel and Power, 1950-51

**Orde, Charles William, b.1884:** entered the Foreign Office, 1909; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1920

**Pound, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Alfred Dudley (1877-1943):** Director of Plans Division, Admiralty, 1922-25; Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, 1927-29; Second Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Personnel at the Admiralty, 1932-25; Admiral of the Fleet, 1939

**Pownall, Lieut.-Col. Sir Assheton (1877-1953):** Conservative MP for Lewisham E., 1918-45

**Reading, (1<sup>st</sup> Marquess) Rufus Daniel Isaacs (1860-1935):** Liberal MP for Reading, 1904-13; Attorney-General, 1910-13; Lord Chief Justice, 1913-21; High Commissioner and Special Ambassador to the USA, 1918; Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1921-26; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1931

**Richmond, Admiral Sir Herbert (1871-1946):** President of the Royal Naval War College, 1920-23; Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Squadron, 1924-25; Commandant of the Imperial Defence College, 1927-28

**Salandra, Antonio (1853-1931):** Italian politician; Minister for Agriculture, 1899, for Finance, 1905, for the Treasury, 1910; Prime Minister, 1914; member of the Council of the League of Nations, 1923-24

**Salisbury, (4<sup>th</sup> Marquess) James Edward Hubert Gascoyne-Cecil (1861-1947):** Conservative MP for Darwen, 1885-92, and for Rochester, 1893-1903; Lord

President of the Council, 1922-24; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1922-23;  
Lord Privy Seal, 1924-29; Leader of the House of Lords, 1925-29

**Segrave, Vice-Admiral John Roderick (1871-1938):** British Naval Representative  
to the League of Nations, 1920-23

**Seymour, Sir Horace James (1885-1978):** joined the Foreign Office, 1908;  
Assistant Under-Secretary of State, 1939-42

**Smith, Admiral Sir Aubrey Clare Hugh (1872-1957):** British Naval Representative  
to the League of Nations, 1923-27

**Smith, Sir Hubert Llewellyn (1864-1945):** General Secretary, Ministry of  
Munitions, 1915; Chief Economic Adviser to the Government, 1919-27; member of  
the Economic Committee of the League of Nations, 1920-27

**Smuts, Field Marshal Jan Christian (1870-1950):** lawyer; South African Minister  
of Defence, 1910-20; South African representative in the Imperial War Cabinet, 1917  
and 1918; Prime Minister of South Africa, 1919-24; Minister of Justice, 1933-39;  
Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs and Defence, 1939-48; Field  
Marshal, 1941

**Sperling, Sir Rowland Arthur Charles (1874-1965):** entered the Foreign Office,  
1909; attached to the British delegation to the Peace Conference at Paris, 1919;  
promoted to be an Assistant Secretary, 1919; attached to the British delegation to the  
Washington Conference, 1921-22; head of the American and African Department in  
the Foreign Office, 1920-24

**Steel, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Miles (1877-1965):** Air Commodore, 1919; Air  
Vice-Marshal, 1925; Air Marshal, 1932; Air Chief Marshal, 1936; Deputy Chief of

the Air Staff until 1936; Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief the Air Defence of Great Britain, 1935-36; Bomber Command, 1936-37

**Templewood, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Samuel John Gurney Hoare (1880-1959):**

Conservative MP for Chelsea, 1910-44; Secretary of State for Air, 1922-24 and 1924-29; Secretary of State for India, 1931-35; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1935; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1936-37; Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 1937-39; Lord Privy Seal, 1939-40; Secretary of State for Air, 1940; Ambassador to Spain, 1940-44

**Thomson, (1<sup>st</sup> Baron) Christopher Birdwood (1875-1930):** Secretary of State for Air, 1924 and 1929-30

**Trenchard, (1<sup>st</sup> Viscount) Marshal of the RAF Hugh Montague (1873-1956):**

Chief of the Air Staff, 1918-29; Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, 1931-35

**Tufton, Charles Henry (1879-1923):** entered the Foreign Office, 1903; promoted to Senior Clerk, 1918; promoted to be an Assistant Secretary, 1920; seconded to the Cabinet Secretariat to take charge of the League of Nations Branch, 1 January 1922; resumed duty at the Foreign Office, 6 November 1922

**Tyrrell, William George, 1st Baron (1866-1947):** entered the Foreign Office, 1889; Assistant Under-Secretary of State, 1919-25; Permanent Under-Secretary of State, 1925-28; British Ambassador in Paris, 1928-34

**Villiers, Gerald Hyde (1882-1953):** entered the Foreign Office, 1903; Assistant Secretary in the Foreign Office, 1921-29

**Walker, Sir Charles (1871-1940):** Assistant Secretary of the Admiralty, 1917;

Accountant General of the Navy, 1918-21; Deputy Secretary of the Admiralty, 1921-31

**Wigram, Ralph Follett, b.1890:** joined the Foreign Office, 1919; promoted to be a First Secretary, 1924

**Wilson, Field Marshal Sir Henry Hughes (1864-1922):** Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 1918-22

**Wilson, Woodrow (1856-1924):** Governor of New Jersey, 1911-13; President of the USA, 1913-20

**Worthington-Evans, Sir Laming (1868-1931):** Conservative MP for Colchester, 1910-29, and for St. George's Division of Westminster, 1929-31; Secretary of State for War, 1921-22 and 1924-29

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**Public Record Office, Kew, London**

**Adm1: Admiralty and Secretariat Papers**

**Adm116: Admiralty and Secretariat Cases (including the Private Correspondence of Sir Eric Geddes, First Lord of the Admiralty 1917-19, and the Miscellaneous Papers of Walter Long, First Lord of the Admiralty 1919-21)**

**Air2: Correspondence**

**Air5: Air Historical Branch Papers (Series II)**

**Air6: Records of Meetings of the Air Council**

**Cab2: Committee of Imperial Defence Minutes**

**Cab4: Committee of Imperial Defence, Imperial Defence Memoranda**

**Cab16: Committee of Imperial Defence, *ad hoc* Sub-Committees**

**Cab21: Registered Files (1916 to 1965)**

**Cab23: Cabinet conclusions**

**Cab24: Cabinet Papers**

**Cab29: International Conference Minutes and Papers**

**FO93: Protocols of Treaties**

**FO371: General Correspondence - Political**

**FO411: Confidential Print League of Nations**

**FO800: Private Collections - Ministers and Officials - Various**

**PRO30/69: Ramsay MacDonald Papers**

**Reco1: Ministry of Reconstruction - Records**

**WO32: Registered Files - General Series**

**WO33: Reports, Memoranda and Papers (O and A Series)**

**WO79: Papers of the Earl of Cavan**

**WO137: Papers of the Earl of Derby**

**WO142: Ministry of Munitions, Trench Warfare and Chemical Warfare Departments**

**WO163: Army Council Minutes 1919-25**

**WO188: Chemical Defence Research Department and Chemical Defence**

**Experimental Establishment, Porton - Correspondence and Papers**

**Private Papers**

**Earl Baldwin Papers, Cambridge University Library**

**Earl Balfour Papers, British Library**

**Admiral Earl Beatty Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich**

**Lord Birkenhead Papers, India Office (Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library)**

**Viscount Cecil of Chelwood Papers, British Library**

**Austen Chamberlain Papers, Birmingham University Library**

**Lord Curzon Papers, India Office (Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library)**

**J.C.C. Davidson Papers, House of Lords Record Office**

**Viscount Esher Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge**

**H.A.L. Fisher Papers, Bodleian Library**

**Major General Charles Howard Foulkes Papers, Liddell Hart Archive, King's College London**

**Baron Hankey Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge**

**Andrew Bonar Law Papers, House of Lords Record Office**

**Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart Papers, Liddell Hart Archive, King's College London**

**Earl Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Record Office**

Gilbert Murray Papers, Bodleian Library

Baron Noel-Baker Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge

Marshal of the RAF Lord Trenchard Papers, Royal Air Force Museum

(2) Published documents.

Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series (DBFP)

Papers Relating to the Foreign Policy of the United States (FRUS)

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June 1919, Cmd. 153 of 1919

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Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, Geneva, 17 June 1925, Cmd. 3604  
of 1925

Final Protocol of the Locarno Conference, 16 October 1925, Cmd. 2525 of 1925

## **(B) SECONDARY SOURCES**

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Raffo, P.S. 'Lord Robert Cecil and the League of Nations', Liverpool University,  
Ph.D., 1967

Shorney, D.J. 'Britain and Disarmament 1916-1931', Durham University, Ph.D., 1980

### **ii) Articles:**

Blatt, J. 'France and the Washington Conference' in Goldstein, E. and Maurer, J.  
(eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-22 - Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and  
the Road to Pearl Harbor (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994)

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1921-36' in Goldstein, E. and Maurer, J. (eds.) The Washington Conference, 1921-22 - Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994)

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----- 'Une aberration inexplicable? Clemenceau and the Abortive Anglo-French Guarantee Treaty of 1919', Diplomacy and Statecraft, 8, 2, July 1997

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